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THOUGHTS
from
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

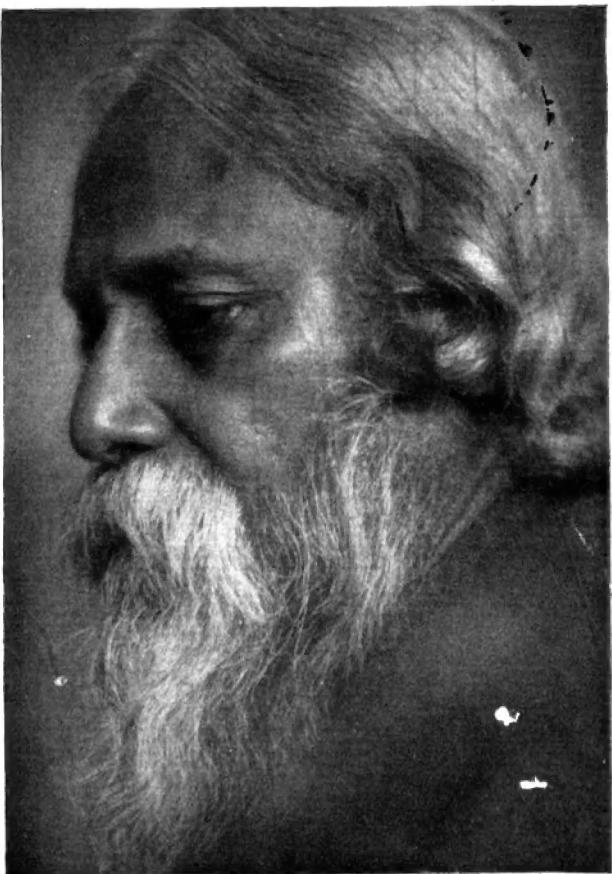


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TORONTO



RABINDRANATH TAGORE

THOU . . .
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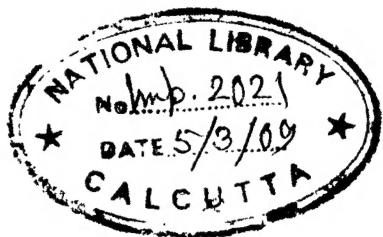
WITH FOUR PORTRAITS



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ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1929

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NOTE

THE earlier passages contained in this book were published in America under the title of *Thought Relics*. A few excerpts in the concluding portion have been taken from those of Tagore's English works which have already appeared in this country, as, in the compiler's opinion, they help to explain the poet's views on certain special subjects. The majority of the passages, however, are from material hitherto unpublished in England.

C. F. A.

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PART I

LAST night I dreamt that I was the same boy that I had been before my mother died. She sat in a room in a garden-house on the bank of the Ganges. I carelessly passed by without paying attention to her, when all of a sudden it flashed through my mind with an unutterable longing that my mother was there. At once I stopped and went back to her and bowing low touched her feet with my head. She held my hand, looked into my face, and said: "You have come!"

In this great world we carelessly pass by the room where Mother sits. Her storeroom is open when we want our food, our bed is ready when we must sleep. Only that touch and that voice are wanting. We are moving about, but never coming close to the personal presence, to be held by the hand and greeted: "You have come!"

IN my early years, I did not know that my sight had become impaired. The first day when, by chance, I put on a pair of eyeglasses, I found that I had suddenly come nearer to everything. I felt I had gained the world twice as much as had been given to me the moment before.

There is such a thing as coming to the nearer presence of the world through the soul. It is like a real home-coming into this world. It is gaining the world more than can be measured—like gaining an instrument, not merely by having it, but by producing upon it music.

SPiritual life is the emancipation of consciousness. Through it we find immediate response of soul everywhere. Before we attain this life, we see men through the medium of self-interest, prejudice or classification, because of the perpetual remoteness around us which we cannot cross over. When the *veil* is removed, we not only see the fleeting forms of the world, but come close to its eternal being, which is ineffable beauty.

Some seek for the evidence of spiritual truth in the outside world. In this quest one may stumble upon ghosts or some super-sensual phenomenon of Nature, but these do not lead us to spiritual truth, as new words in a dictionary do not give us literature.

TO-DAY is the special day of the yearly festival of our *ashram*, and we must make time to realise in the heart of this place the truth which is beauty. And for this we have lighted our lamps. In the morning the sun came out brightly; in the dusk the stars held up their lights. But these were not sufficient for us. Until we light our own little lamps, the world of lights in the sky is in vain, and unless we make our own preparations, the great wealth of the world-preparations remains waiting like a lute for the finger-touch.

I NEED have no anxiety about the world of Nature.
The sun does not wait to be trimmed by me.

But from the early morning all my thoughts are occupied by this little world of my self. Its importance is owing to the fact that I have a world given to me which is mine. It is great because I have the power to make it worthy of its relationship with me; it is great because by its help I can offer my own hospitality to the God of all the world.

IN our everyday world we live in poverty; our resources have to be husbanded with care; our strength becomes exhausted, and we come to our God as beggars for our joy of life. On festival days, we display our wealth and say to Him that we are even as He is; and we are not afraid to spend. This is the day when we bring to Him our own gift of joy. For we truly meet God, when we come to Him with our offerings and not with our wants.

LIFE's highest opportunity is to be able to offer hospitality to our God. We live in God's world and forget Him, for the blind acceptance which is one-sided never finds its truth. It is a desert which receives rain but never offers fruit in return, and its receiving has no meaning. God's world is given to us, and when we offer our world to God, then the gift is realised.

WHEN I had thrust the great world unnoticed behind the bars of my office habit, I developed in me the belief that I was indispensable. Of the many means by which Nature exacts work from man, this pride is one of the most efficient. Those who work for money, work only to the extent of their wages, up to a definite point, beyond which they would count it a loss to work. But those whose pride impels them to work, they have no rest; even over-time work is not felt as a loss by them.

So busy used I to be under the belief that I was indispensable, that I hardly dared to wink. My doctor now and again would warn me, saying: "Stop, take it easy". But I would reply: "How will things go on if I stop?" Just then my health failed me, the wheels of my car broke down and it came to a stop beneath this window. From here I looked out upon the limitless space. There I saw whirling the numberless flashing wheels of the triumphal chariot of time,—no dust raised, no din, not even a scratch left on the roadway. On a sudden I came to myself. I clearly perceived that things could get along without me. There was no sign that those wheels would stop, or drag the least bit, for lack of anyone in particular.

But is this to be admitted so easily as all that? Even if I admit it in words, my mind refuses assent. If it be really quite the same whether I go or stay, how then did my pride of self find a place in the universe, even for a moment? On what could it have taken its stand? Amidst all the plentifullness with which space and time are teeming, it was nevertheless not possible to leave out this self of mine. The fact that I am indispensable is proved by the fact that *I am*.

EGOISM is the price paid for the fact of existence. So long as I realise this price within me, so long do I steadfastly bear all the pains and penalties of keeping myself in existence. That is why the Buddhists have it, that to destroy egoism is to cut at the root of existence: for without the pride of self it ceases to be worth while to exist.

However that may be, this price has been furnished from some fund or other,—in other words, it matters somewhere that I should be, and the price paid is the measure of how much it matters. The whole universe—every molecule and atom of it—is assisting this desire that I should be. And it is the glory of this desire which is manifest in my pride of self. By virtue of this glory this infinitesimal “I” is not lower than any other thing in this universe, in measure or value.

MAN has viewed the desire in him to *be* in two different ways. Some have held it to be an impulse of Creative Power, some a joyous self-expression of Creative Love. And man sets before himself different goals as the object of his life according as he views the fact of his *being* as the revealment of Power or of Love.

The value which our entity receives from Power is quite different in its aspect from that which it receives from Love. The direction in which we are impelled by our pride, in the field of Power, is the opposite of that given by our pride, in the field of Love.

POWER can be measured. Its volume, its weight, its momentum can all be brought within the purview of mathematics. So it is the endeavour of those who hold Power to be supreme, to increase in bulk. They would repeatedly multiply numbers,—the number of men, the number of coins, the number of appliances. When they strive for success they sacrifice others' wealth, others' rights, others' lives; for sacrifice is the essence of the cult of Power; and the earth is running red with the blood of that sacrifice.

The distinctive feature of materialism is the measurability of its outward expression, which is the same thing as the finiteness of its boundaries. And the disputes, civil and criminal, which have raged in the history of man, have mostly been over these same boundaries. To increase one's own bounds one has necessarily to encroach upon those of others. So, because the pride of Power is the pride of quantity, the most powerful telescope, when pointed in the direction of Power, fails to reveal the shore of peace across the sea of blood.

BUT when engaged in adding up the quantities of these forces and facts of Power, we do not find them to be an ever-increasing series. In our pursuit of the principle of accumulation we are all of a sudden held up by stumbling upon the principle of check which bars the way. We discover that there is not only onward motion, but there are also pauses. And we repeatedly find in history that whenever the blindness of Power has tried to overrule this rule of rhythm, it has committed suicide. And that is why man still remembers the story of the toppling over of the Tower of Babel.

So we see that the principle of Power, of which the outward expression is bulk, is neither the final nor the supreme Truth. It has to stop itself to keep time with the rhythm of the universe. Restraint is the gateway of the Good. The value of the Good is not measured in terms of dimension or multitude. He who has known it within himself feels no shame in rags and tatters. He rolls his crown in the dust and marches out on the open road.

WHEN from the principle of Power we arrive at the principle of Beauty, we at once understand that, all this while, we had been offering incense at the wrong shrine; that Power grows bloated on the blood of its victims only to perish of surfeit; that try as we may by adding to armies and armaments, by increasing the number and variety of naval craft, by heaping up our share of the loot of war, arithmetic will never serve to make true that which is untrue; that at the end we shall die crushed under the weight of our multiplication of things.

When the *Rishi* Yainavalkya, on the eve of his departure, offered to leave his wife Maitreyi well-established upon an enumeration of what he had gathered together during his life, she exclaimed:

What am I to do with these, which are not of the immortal spirit?

Of what avail is it to add and add and add? By going on increasing the volume or pitch of sound we can get nothing but a shriek. We can gain music only by restraining the sound and giving it the melody of the rhythm of perfection.

Man grows gigantic by the appropriation of everything for himself: he attains harmony by giving himself up. In this harmony is peace,—never the outcome of external organisation or of coalition between power and power,—the peace which rests on truth and consists in curbing of greed, in the forgiveness of sympathy.

THE question is: "In which Truth is my entity to realise its fullest value,—in Power or in Love?" If we accept Power as that Truth we must also recognise conflict as inevitable and eternal. According to many European writers the Religion of Peace and Love is but a precarious coat of armour within which the weak seek shelter, but for which the laws of Nature have but scant respect. That which the timid preachers of religion anathematise as unrighteousness,—that alone is the sure road which leads man to success.

The opposite school do not wholly deny this. They admit the premises but they say:

Adharmenaidhatē tābat, tato bhadrāni pashyati, tatah sapat-nān jayati,—samūlastu vinashyati.

In unrighteousness they prosper, in it they find their good, through it they defeat their enemies,—but they perish at the root.

It is still dark. The day is about to dawn. The stall-keepers, who gathered for the festival fair, have spent the winter night singing round the lighted fires. Now they are preparing to disperse. Their noise, unlike the birds' notes, disturbs the morning peace.

For man stands at the parting of the ways. His strings have to be tuned for a deeper and a more complex music than those of Nature. Man has his mind which reasons, and his will which seeks its own path. These have not yet found their full harmony with their surroundings. Therefore they are apt to break out in the ugliness of discord.

But in this very ugliness lies the great hope of the future. For these discords are not mere facts which we are compelled to acknowledge; they are ugly facts. This itself asserts every moment that they are not what they should be; they are incomplete, and they are hopeful because they are painful.

We are like a stray line of a poem, which ever feels that it rhymes with another line and must find it, or miss its own fulfilment. This quest of the unattained is the great impulse in man which brings forth all his best creations. Man seems deeply to be aware of a separation at the root of his being, he cries to be led across it to a union; and somehow he knows that it is love which can lead him to a love which is final.

I HAVE a relationship with the world which is deeply personal. It is not of mere knowledge and use. All our relationships with facts have an infinite medium which is Law, *satyam*; all our relationship with truth has an infinite medium which is Reason, *gnānam*; all our personal relationship has an infinite medium which is Love, *ānandam*.

We are not mere facts in this world, like pieces of stone; we are persons. And therefore we cannot be content with drifting along the stream of circumstances. We have a central ideal of love with which to harmonise our existence, we have to manifest a truth in our life, which is the perfect relationship with the Eternal Person.

LAST night when the north wind was keen, like a sharp blade of steel, the stall-keepers improvised some kind of shelter with twigs and leaves. With all its flimsiness it was the most important necessity for them, for the time. But this morning, before it is light, we hear them shouting for their bullocks and dragging out from underneath the trees their creaking carts. It is urgently important for them now to leave their shelter.

“I want” has its constant counterweight—“I do not want”. Otherwise the monster necessity, with its immovable weight, would crush all existence. For the moment we may sigh at the fact that nothing remains for long, but we are saved from permanent despair at the calamity that nothing moves at all. Things remain and things move—between these two contrary currents we have found our dwelling-place and freedom.

THE horse harnessed to a carriage is only a part of it, the master is he who drives it unattached. We are enjoined to work with vigour and yet retain our detachment of mind. For our deeds must express our freedom above all, otherwise we become like wheels revolving because compelled. There is a harmony between doing and not doing, between gaining and renouncing, which we must attain.

Our daily flow of prayer carries our self into the supreme Self, it makes us feel the reality of that fullness which we gain by utterly giving ourselves up, makes our consciousness expand in a large world of peace, where movements are beauty and all relations are truths because of their inner freedom, which is disinterestedness.

OUR will attains its perfection when it is one with love, for only love is true freedom. This freedom is not in the negation of restraint. It spontaneously accepts bondage, because bondage does not bind it, but only measures its truth. Non-slavery is in the cessation of service, but freedom is in service itself.

A village poet of Bengal says:

“In love the end is neither pain nor pleasure, but love only.

Love gives freedom while it binds, for love is what unites.”

LOVE is not a mere impulse, it must contain truth, which is law. It accepts limitations from truth because of its own inner wealth. The child willingly exercises restraint to correct its bodily balance, because it has true pleasure in the freedom of its movements; and love also counts no cost as too great to realise its truth. Poetry is much more strict in its form of expression than prose, because poetry has the freedom of joy in its origin and end. Our love of God is accurately careful of its responsibilities. It is austere in its probity and it must have intellect for its ally. Since what it deals with is immense in value, it has to be cautious about the purity of its coins. Therefore, when our soul cries for the gift of immortality, its first prayer is,—“Lead me from the unreal to Truth”.

THE Father is working in His world, but the Beloved is lying asleep in our heart, in the depth of its darkness. He will wake only when our own love wakes. It may sound paradoxical to say that we are unconscious of our own love, as we are unconscious of the fact that the earth is carrying us round the sun. But the truth is that all parts of our nature are not fully illuminated, and in most cases we have the immediate knowledge of ourselves only on the surface where our mind is occupied with the temporary needs and fermentations of our life.

To wake up in love is not to wake up in a world of sweetness, but in the world of heroic endeavours where life wins its eternity through death, and joy its worth in suffering. As the most positive affirmation of truth is in love, it must realise itself through all that threatens us with deprivation. Poverty is afraid of the smallest loss, and wealth is daring in its expenditure. Love is the wealth of soul and therefore it reveals itself in utmost bravery and fortitude. And because it finds its resource in itself it begs not praise from men and no punishment can reach it from outside.

THE world of things in which we live misses its equilibrium when its communication with the world of love is lost. Then we have to pay with our soul for objects which are immensely cheap. And this can only happen when the prison walls of things threaten us with being final in themselves. Then it gives rise to terrible fights, jealousies and coercions, to a scramble for space and opportunities, for these are limited. We become painfully aware of the evil of this and try all measures of adjustment within the narrow bounds of a mutilated truth. This leads to failures. Only he helps us who proves by his life that we have a soul whose dwelling is in the kingdom of love, and things lose the tyranny of fictitious price when we come to our spiritual freedom.

It is hard for us to free ourselves from the grip of our acquisitions. For the pull of their gravitation is towards the centre of our self. The force of perfect love acts towards the contrary direction. And this is why love gives us freedom from the weight of things. Therefore our days of joy are our days of expenditure. It is not the lightness of pressure in the outside world which we need in order to be free, but love which has the power to bear the world's weight, not only with ease, but with joy.

ONLY because we have closed our path to the inner world of freedom, has the outer world become terrible in its exactions. It is slavery to continue to live in a sphere where things are, yet their meaning is obstructed. It has become possible for men to say that existence is evil only because, in our blindness, we have missed something in which our existence has its truth. If a bird tries to soar in the sky with only one of its wings, it is offended with the wind for buffeting it down to the dust.

COMING to the theatre of life we foolishly sit with our back to the stage. We see the gilded pillars and decorations, we watch the coming and going of the crowd; and when the light is put out at the end, we ask ourselves in bewilderment, what is the meaning of it all? If we paid attention to the inner stage, we could witness the eternal love-drama of the soul and be assured that it has pauses, but no end, and that the gorgeous world-preparations are not a magnificent delirium of things.

WE criticise Nature from outside when we separate it in our mind from human nature, and blame it for being devoid of pity and justice. Let the wick burn with indignation at the want of light in the rest of the candle, but the truth is that the wick represents the whole candle in its illumination. Obstacles are necessary companions to expression, and we know that the positive element in language is not in its obstructiveness. Exclusively viewed from the side of the obstacle, Nature appears as inimical to the idea of morality. But if that were absolutely true, moral life could never come to exist. Life, moral or physical, is not a completed fact, but is a continual process, depending for its movement upon two contrary forces, the force of resistance and that of expression. Dividing these forces into two mutually opposing principles does not help us, for the truth dwells not in the opposition but in its continual reconciliation.

GOOD taste which is needful for the true understanding of a poem, comes from the vision of unity seen in the light of imagination. Faith has the similar function in our acceptance of life. It is a spiritual organ of sight which enables us instinctively to realise the vision of wholeness when in fact we only see the parts. Sceptics may scoff at this vision as an hallucination, they may select and arrange facts in such a manner as to disprove it, and yet faith never doubts its own direct apprehension of the inner truth which binds, which builds, which heals, which leads to an ideal of fullness. Faith is this spontaneous response in our being to the voice of the all-pervading Yes, and therefore it is the greatest of all creative forces in human life. It is not merely a passive acknowledgement of truth, it is an ever active effort for attaining harmony with that peace which is in the rhythm of truth in creation, goodness which is in the rhythm of combination in society, and unity of love which is in the rhythm of self-realisation in soul. The mere fact of innumerable breaks in such a rhythm no more proves its unreality to a man gifted with faith than the prevalent fact of harsh notes and noises disproves the truth of music to a musician. It only calls him to a strenuous endeavour to mend the break and establish harmony with truth.

THE day breaks in the east, like a bud bursting its sheath to come out in flower. But if this fact belonged only to the outside world of events, how could we ever find our entrance into it? It is a sunrise in the sky of our consciousness, it is a new creation, fresh in bloom, in our life.

Open your eyes and see. Feel this world as a living flute might feel the breath of music passing through it, feel the meeting of creative joy in the depth of your consciousness. Meet this morning light in the majesty of your existence, where it is one with you. But if you sit with your face turned away, you build a separating barrier in the undivided sphere of creation, where events and the creative consciousness meet.

DARKNESS is that which isolates our consciousness within our own self. It hides the great truth of our unity with the world, giving rise to doubt and contention. Groping in the dark, we stumble against objects to which we cling, believing them to be the only things we have. When light comes we slacken our hold, finding them to be mere parts of the all to which we are related. This is freedom—freedom from the isolation of self, from the isolation of things which impart fierce intensity to our sense of possession. Our God is that freedom, for He is Light, and in that light we find out truth, which is our perfect relationship with all.

FEAR assumes unlimited dimensions in the dark, because it is the shadow of the self which has lost its foothold in the all; the self which is a doubter, an unbeliever, which puts its emphasis upon negation, exaggerating detached facts into fearful distortions. In the light we find the harmony of things and know that our world is great and therefore we are great; we know that, with more and more extensive realisation of truth, conflicts will vanish; for existence itself is harmony.

IN Nature we find the presence of law in truth, and the presence of joy in beauty. It is urgently necessary for us to know truth, but we are free to ignore the presence of joy. It is not safe for our life to forget that it becomes light in the morning; but we can safely forget that morning is beautiful, and yet live.

In this realm of truth we are bound, in the realm of beauty we are free. We must pay our homage to God where He rules; but we may laugh at Him where He loves. He keeps us bound where He binds Himself, He gives us freedom where He is infinite. The great power of beauty is in its modesty. It makes way for the least of us, it waits in silence. It must have our all or nothing, therefore it never asks. It suffers meekly when it is refused, but it has its eternity.

An acquaintance of mine has suddenly died and once again I come to know death, the tritest of all truisms in this world.

The moralist teaches us to know the world as unreal through the contemplation of death. But to make renunciation easy by calling the world names is neither true nor brave. For that renunciation is no renunciation at all in which things have lost their value.

On the contrary, the world is so true, that death's wheel leaves no mark upon it. The untruth is in the belief that this self of ours for its own permanent use can rob this world of even a particle of its things. Death has its concern only with our self and not with this world. The world never loses an atom, it is our self which suffers.

THREE are men whose idea of life is static, who long for its continuation after death only because of their wish for permanence and not perfection; they love to imagine that the things to which they are accustomed will persist for ever. They completely identify themselves in their minds with their fixed surroundings and with whatever they have gathered, and to have to leave these is death for them. They forget that the true meaning of living is outliving, it is ever growing out of itself. The fruit clings to its stem, its skin clings to the pulp and the pulp to the seed so long as the fruit is immature, so long as it is not ready for its course of further life. Its outer covering and its inner core are not yet differentiated and it only proves its life by its strength of tenacity. But when the seed is ripe its hold upon its surroundings is loosened, its pulp attains fragrance, sweetness, and detachment, and is dedicated to all who need it. Birds peck at it and it is not hurt, the storm plucks it and flings it to the dust and it is not destroyed. It proves its immortality by its renunciation.

IN Hindu scriptures this world is considered to be an egg. If that be true, then this egg must have for its content a living being whose fulfilment is to break through its shell into a freer existence.

While our world feeds us, gives us shelter, it encloses us all around. The limitedness of our narrow sensibility and range of thought build the shell of our world egg, within which our consciousness is confined. If we could widen its boundaries even by a small fraction, if some of the invisible rays could come within our sphere of perception, if a few more of the dance rhythms of creation could find response in some added strings of our senses, then the whole aspect of our world would be completely changed.

To come out of the bounds of our sensibility and mental vision into a wider freedom is the meaning of our immortality. Can we imagine in our present stage of confinement what that sphere of freedom is like? From the data of all the facts within the shell can a chick ever form the idea of the world into which it is to be born?

THIE passivity which is the predominant fact of the shell life is secretly contradicted by the rudimentary wings. Likewise in the confinement of our present state, in spite of the fact that a great part of our life is passively obedient to circumstances, there struggles in us our aspiration for freedom against impediments that appear to be ultimate. This is our spiritual pair of wings which have their significance in a full opportunity to soar. Had immortality only meant an endless persistence of our shell itself, then we should admit that these impotent wings were cursed by an evil power with an eternity of hindrance. But this we cannot admit. Man has ever talked of emancipation from what is present, from what seems final. While the spirit of life in him seeks continuance, the spirit of immortality seeks emancipation.

THE life of the seed within the fruit is absolutely different from its life of growth as a tree. The life which is bound on all sides within the environment of our self, within the limited range of our senses, must be so fundamentally different from the life of an emancipated soul that it is impossible to imagine the latter while we are immured in the sheath of self. And therefore in our desire for eternal life we pray for an eternity of our habit and comfort, forgetting that immortality is in repeatedly transcending the definite forms of life in order to pursue the infinite truth of life. Those who think that life's true meaning is in the persistence of its particular forms which are familiar to us are like misers, who have not the power to know that the meaning of money can only be found by spending it, by changing the symbol into truth

ALL our desires are but focussing our will to a limited range of experience. These become jealously tenacious and combative when we fail to imagine that our experience will widen. In our childhood we wished for an unbounded continuity in our enjoyment of a particular food or game and we refused to believe in the worth of a mature age which had different interests altogether. Those who build their vision of a life after death upon the foundation of desires belonging to the present life merely show their want of faith in Eternal life. They cling to what they have because they cannot believe that their love for the present is only an indication that this love will persist through their growth, stimulating it, and not that it will retard their growth altogether.

THE world of sleep is fundamental,—it is the world of the mother's womb. It is the world where the grass and the trees live and find their beauty of reposefulness. Our consciousness has freed itself from its embrace, asserting its independence. It is the freedom of the fountain which must come over and over again to its origin to renew its play. The whole depth and spread of the still water finds its own play in the play of this little fountain. In like manner, it is in our own consciousness that the universe knows itself. Therefore this consciousness has to be great in order to be true. Our consciousness is the music of the world, its dance, its poem. It has its pauses in the bosom of the original sleep, to be fed with immortality at her breast.

IN man's nature there is a division between the fleeting and the permanent, which the animals have not, because they live on the surface of life. Therefore they are saved from the danger of trying to give permanence to things which have not that quality in themselves. Only because man has to a great extent a preservative power in his inner world, does he try in his greed to keep his appetites ever fresh, steeping them in the elixir of imagination. These appetites are of outer nature, and for the animals they quit the stage when they have played their parts. But when we try to hoard them in our inner life we wrongly put upon them the seal of the infinite. Thus our land of immortality is every day being invaded by the retinue of death, and the servants who ought to be dismissed with their wages paid, are enshrined in our sanctuary



THE POET IN EUROPE

PART II

WEALTH is the symbol of power. Therefore wealth must move and flow in order to be perfect. For power is active, it is movement. But mere movement is superficial. It must be a growth and therefore continual gaining. This gain is something which not merely moves, but remains.

The highest harmony of movement and rest is in the spiritual life, whose essence is love. Love of God, nay, love in all forms, is the reaching of the goal and yet never coming to a stop. Power, when it reaches its end, stops and grows careful of its hoarding. Love, when it reaches its end, reaches endlessness and therefore is not afraid of spending its all.

BEING by nature social, some portion of our energies we must employ to keep up the flow of sociality. But its field and action are on the surface. The ripples of gregariousness are not the deep currents of human love. The men who have strong social instincts are not necessarily lovers of men.

The men who are spendthrifts very often lack true generosity. In most cases they cannot give, but can only spend. And also like them the social men can spend themselves, but not give themselves. This reckless spending creates a vacuum which we fill up with the debris of activities, whose object is to bury time.

BUT we cannot afford to fritter away our solitude where lies the throne of the infinite. We cannot truly live for one another if we never claim the freedom to live alone, if our social duties consist in helping one another to forget that we have souls. To exhaust ourselves completely in mere efforts to give company to each other, is to cheat the world of our best, the best which is the product of the amplitude of our inner atmosphere of leisure. Society poisons the air it breathes, where it hemms in the individual with a revolving crowd of distractions.

IN our country it is accounted the greatest calamity to have one's courtyard brought under the plough. Because, in the courtyard, man has made his very own the immense wealth called space. Space is not a rare commodity outside, but one does not *get* it till he can bring it inside and make it his own. The space of the courtyard, man has made part of his home. Here the light of the sun is revealed as his own light, and here his baby claps his little hands to call to the moon. So if the courtyard be not kept open, but be used for sowing crops, then is the nest destroyed in which the outside Universe can come and dwell as man's own universe.

THE difference between a really rich man and a poor man is, that the former can afford vast open spaces in his home. The furniture with which a rich man encumbers his house may be valuable, but the space with which he makes his courtyard wide, his garden extensive, is of infinitely greater value. The business place of the merchant is crowded with his stock,—there he has not the means of keeping spaces vacant, there he is miserly, and millionaire though he be, there he is poor. But in his home that same merchant flouts mere utility by the length and breadth and height of his room—to say nothing of the expanse of his garden—and gives to space the place of honour. It is here that the merchant is rich.

Not only unoccupied space, but unoccupied time, also, is of the highest value. The rich man, out of his abundance, can purchase leisure. It is in fact a test of his riches, this power to keep fallow wide stretches of time, which want cannot compel him to plough up.

There is yet another place where an open expanse is the most valuable of all,—and that is in the mind. Thoughts which must be thought, from which there is no escape, are but worries. The thoughts of the poor and the miserable cling to their minds as the ivy to a ruined temple.)

Pain closes up all openings of the mind. Health may be defined as the state in which the physical consciousness lies fallow, like an open heath. Let there be but a touch of gout in the remotest toe, and the whole of consciousness is filled with pain, leaving not a corner empty.)

Just as one cannot live grandly without unoccu-

pied spaces, so the mind cannot think grandly without unoccupied leisure,—otherwise for it truth becomes petty. And like dim light, petty truth distorts vision, encourages fear, and keeps narrow the field of communion between man and man.

IN society, we find our places according to a certain conventional price set upon us, like toys arranged in the shop windows according to their value. This makes us forget that we are not for sale, that the social man is not the whole man.

I have known a fisherman, singing while fishing all day in the Ganges, who was pointed out to me by my boatman with awe as a man possessed by God. He is out of reach of the fluctuation of market prices, for he has found out the infinite value of the soul, which the monarchs of the world have not. In history there were men who are still recognised by their eternal worth; but this recognition is not the only proof of their value. For immortality is not in its outer manifestation, and dark rays are rays all the same, though we do not see them. The figure of this fisherman comes to my mind when I think that their number is not small who with their lives sing the epic of the freedom of soul, but will never be known in history.

OUR aspiration becomes easy when through us our community aspires. Money-making is pursued by most men, not merely because money is useful, but rather because it is desired by others.) The savages' lust for head-hunting becomes irresistible when it is prevalent in the community.) When the majority wishes through us, we are ready to sacrifice truth to its claims.)

Doubts assail us and strength fails in our aspiration for spiritual life chiefly because it is not the aspiration of the surrounding crowd. Therefore our wish for the highest has to be so immensely true, so that it can sustain itself in all circumstances against the constant pressure of the crowd's wish. We need all the succour of the eternal to fight against the combined antagonism of the congregated moments.)

OUR thoughts naturally move in their surrounding element of man's mind, like birds in the air. This sky of mind is perpetually troubled by contrary wind-currents, by doubts and denials, by levity and pride; it is obscured by the dust and smoke of the busy world. Our spiritual wings require spontaneity of speed, grace of perfect movement; but when they are constantly buffeted by noisy gusts from all sides it makes us too conscious of our limitations, and consequently that self-abandonment becomes difficult which is necessary for our communion with the infinite. And yet the task has to be done and the most difficult path taken for the highest attainment of life. The great teachers have ever won that infinity of solitude, needed for soul's meeting with her God, through the crowd and for the crowd themselves. In the lives of these men we witness the proof of our own limitless power, and the faith that we thus gain gives freedom to our aspiration in the face of adversity.

SOME part of the earth's water becomes rarefied and ascends to the skies. With the movement and the music it acquires in those pure heights it then showers down, back to the water of the earth, making it wholesome and fresh. Similarly, part of the mind of humanity rises up out of the world and flies skywards; but this sky-soaring mind attains completeness only when it has returned, to mingle with the earth-bound mind. This is the ventilation of religion, the circulation of man's ideals between heaven and earth.

THERE are the rain of mud, the rain of blood, and such-like dire phenomena of which we hear tell. These happen when the purity of the atmosphere is sullied and the air is burdened with dirt. Then it is not the song of the sky which descends in purifying showers, but just the earth's own sins which fall back on it. Then our religion itself grows muddy, the collective egoism of the people assumes pious names, and we boast of our God taking the lead in our adventures of self-seeking, in our campaign of hatred.

TO-DAY on the sin-laden dust of the earth pours tainted rain from the sky. Our long wait for the cleansing bath in pure water from on high has been repeatedly doomed to disappointment; the mud is soiling our minds, and marks of blood are also showing. How long can we keep on wiping this away? Even the pure silence of the empyrean is powerless to clarify the discordant notes of the prayer for peace which is rising from a blood-stained world.

'Peace? Who can truly pray for Peace? Only they who are ready to renounce.

*Atha dheerā amṛitatvam viditva
Druvam adhruvēshviha na prārthayantē.*

*Men of tranquil mind, being sure of Immortal Truth,
never seek the eternal in things of the moment.*

OUR greatest men have shown immense respect for mankind in their expectations. We come to believe in ourselves because of what is asked of us. Practical men base their arrangements upon their estimates of man's limitations. Therefore the great creations of history, the creations that have their foundation upon the faith in the infinite in man, have not their origin in the common sense of practical men. When Buddha said to men: "Spread your thoughts of love beyond limits", when Christ said: "Love your enemies", their words transcended the average standard of ideals belonging to the ordinary world. But they ever remind us that our true life is not the life of the ordinary world, and we have a fund of resources in us which is inexhaustible. It is not for us to despair, because the highest hope for mankind has been uttered by the great words of great men. ,

It is an important duty for man so to bear himself that he may not fail to be recognised as man,—not only in his own interest, but because of his responsibilities to others. The man who belittles himself lowers not only his own value but that of all mankind. Man knows himself as great where he sees great men,—and the truer such vision of greatness becomes, the easier it becomes to be great.

To fledgeling birds flight in the sky may appear incredible. They may with apparent reason measure the highest limit of their possibilities by the limited standard of their nests. But, in the meanwhile, they find that their food is not grown inside those nests, it is brought to them across the measureless blue. There is a silent voice that speaks to them, that they are more than what they are, and that they must not laugh at the message of soaring wings and glad songs of freedom.

THE more we feel afraid of pain, the more we build all kinds of hiding-places in which to hide ourselves from our own truth. Our wealth and honour are barricades that keep us at arm's length from the touch of our own true selves. Thus we become more familiar with that which we have, than that which we are. Our sufferings seek us out through our protections; they take away our artificial props and set us face to face with our naked loneliness.

This stripping bare of our deeper selves is not only necessary for self-exploration and the discovery of our innermost resources, but it is also needed for our purification. For beneath our safe cover of prosperity and comfort, dirt and dead matter gather every day waiting to be cleared by the rude rubbing of pain.

THE old is prudent but is not wise. Wisdom is that freshness of mind which enables one to realise that truth is not hoarded in caskets of maxims, it is free and living. Great sufferings lead us to wisdom because these are the birth-throes through which our mind is freed from its habit-environment, and comes naked into the arms of reality. Wisdom has the character of the child perfected through knowledge and feeling.

MORNING has its birds' songs, and life's daybreak has the music of the child. At every home comes to us this refrain of life with its pure notes of beauty. The bloom constantly is brushed off the world of man by the friction of its dirt, it is roughened and begrimed by the callous touch of age; yet there flows unobstructed the daily renewal of humanity in its ceaseless rebirths. The eternal repeats its call at man's gate in every child, and the morning's message keeps its melody unimpaired.

It rouses response to-day in my heart, the life's awakening call that comes from the children's shouts and songs round me, and I feel that creation finds its own true voice in them, the creation which keeps nestled in its heart the spirit of the child.

THIS symphony made of the morning light and children's mirth does not speak to me of pure joy. For in my heart it minglest with another strain which tempers its sparkle with a shade of sadness. It is a cry of unattained harmony, unfulfilled hope. The simple notes of ideal completeness dash themselves against life's complexities, rugged with flaws and fractures, and a sob of anguish spreads over our thoughts. For pain finds its own music in the notes that joy brings to it from heaven, as the pebbles find theirs from the flow of the laughing stream.

EXISTENCE is the play of the fountain of immortality. Wash your soul with its water, you who are old, and feel that you are of the same age with the flower that has blossomed this morning and with this light which carries fresh in its countenance the first smile of creation. This is freedom, freedom from the mist which for the time being masks our spirit with the semblance of blurred age, hiding from us the truth that we are the children of the immortal. Could the child bring such a joy to the heart of man if age and death were true? Does not that joy come from a direct recognition of the truth of deathless life, of endless growth and ever-renewed hope of perfection?

To alleviate pain, to try to remove its causes, are
Tworthy of man. All the same, we must know that a great part of our sufferings has to be ascribed to the beginning of our entrance into a new plane of existence to which our vital nature has not been completely adapted nor our mind thoroughly accustomed. From a narrow perfection of animality man has arrived in the imperfectness of spiritual life, where the civil war between the forces of our primitive past and those belonging to our future has robbed us of peace. Not having reached its normal stage, humanity is enveloped in the incandescent vapour of suffering.

MAN'S greatness is like the morning sun, its horizon is far before us. Man truly lives in the life that is beyond him; he toils for the unknown master, he stores for the unborn, he leaves the best harvest of his life for reapers who have not yet come; the time which is yet to be is truer to him than the time which is. Man offers himself as a sacrifice for all that lies in the future; the motive power which guides the course of his growth is expectation. All this shows that man is not yet born, his history is the history of birth-throes. Our greatest men bring in their life the message of man's future birth; for they dwell in the time to come, making it ready for ourselves. They reveal to us a life whose glory is not in the absence of suffering, but in the fact that its sufferings have been made creative, transmuted into the stuff of life itself. It is like the tree which garners the sun's heat and light in its fibre and breaks out in beauty of fruitfulness. By extinguishing the fire of pain man may find his comfort, his period of slumber, which is the period of stagnant time, an imprisoned present; but by mastering this fire he lights his lamp of wisdom which gives illumination to the endless future. |

THREE are sufferings about which the question comes to our mind whether we deserve them. We must frankly acknowledge that explanations are not offered to us. So it does not help us in the least to complain; let us rather be worthy of the challenge thrown to us by them. That we have been wounded is a fact which can be ignored, but that we have been brave is a truth of the highest importance. For the former belongs to the outer world of cause and effect, while the latter belongs to the world of spirit.

WE must know that to be provided with an exact apportionment of what we deserve and need, is like travelling in a world whose flatness is ideally perfect, and therefore where the fluid forces of Nature are held in suspense. We require ups and downs, however unpleasant they may be, in our life's geography, in order to make our thoughts and energies fluently active. Our life's journey is a journey in an unknown country, where hills and hollows come in our way un-awares, keeping our minds ever active in dealing with them. They do not come according to our deserts, but our deserts are judged according to our treatment of them.

WHEN the ship's hold is full of water, then only does the buffeting of the outside waters become a menace. The inside water is not so visibly threatening, its tumult not so stupendously apparent,—it destroys with its dead weight. So the temptation is strong to cast all the blame on the waves outside. But if good sense does not dawn in time, on all hands manning the pumps, then sinking is inevitable. However hopeless the task of getting rid of the internal water may now and then appear, it is surely more hopeful than trying to bale away the water of the outside seas!

Obstacles and opposition from without there always will be, but they become dangers only when there are also obstacles and opposition within.

WHEN we come to believe that we are in possession of our God because we belong to some particular sect, it gives us such a complete sense of comfort, that God is needed no longer except for quarrelling with others whose idea of God differs from ours in theoretical details.

Having been able to make provision for our God in some shadow-land of creed, we feel free to reserve all the space for ourselves in the world of reality, ridding it of the wonder of the infinite, making it as trivial as our own household furniture. (Such unlimited vulgarity only becomes possible when we have no doubt in our minds that we believe in God while our life ignores Him.)

THE pious man of sect is proud because he is confident of his right of possession in God. The man of devotion is meek because he is conscious of God's right of love over his life and soul. The object of our possession becomes smaller than ourselves, and without acknowledging it in so many words the bigoted sectarian has an implicit belief that God can be kept secured for certain individuals in a cage which is of their own make. In a similar manner the primitive races of men believe that their ceremonials have a magic influence upon their deities. Sectarianism is a perverse form of worldliness in the disguise of religion; it breeds a narrowness of heart in a greater measure than the cult of the world based upon material interest can ever do. For undisguised pursuit of self has its safety in its openness, like filth exposed to the sun and air. But the self-magnification with its consequent lessening of God that goes on unchecked under the cover of sectarianism loses its chance of salvation because it defiles the very source of purity.

REILIGION, like poetry, is not a mere idea, it is expression. The self-expression of God is in the endless variedness of creation; and our attitude towards the Infinite Being must also in its expression have a variedness of individuality ceaseless and unending. Those sects which jealously build their boundaries with too rigid creeds excluding all spontaneous movement of the living spirit may keep hoarded their theology, but they kill religion.

THE attempt to make the one religion which is their own prevail for all time and space, comes naturally to men addicted to sectarianism. This makes it offensive to them to be told that God is generous in His distribution of love, and His means of communication with men have not been restricted to a blind lane abruptly stopping at one historical point of time and place. If humanity ever happens to be overwhelmed with a catastrophe of a universal flood of one religion, then God will have to make provision for another Noah's Ark to save His creatures from a spiritual destruction.

WHEN religion is in the complete possession of the sect and is made smooth to the level of the monotonous average, it becomes correct and comfortable, but loses the living spirit of art. For art is the expression of the universal through the individual, and religion in its outer aspect is the art of the human soul. It almost becomes a matter of pride and a sign of superior culture to be able to outrage all codes of decency imposed by an authorised religion bearing the stamp of approval of an organisation which can persecute but has not the power to persuade.

As an analogous phenomenon, we have known literary men deliberately cultivating a dread of whatever has the reputation of goodness, and also men of art afraid of being suspected as lovers of the beautiful. They rebel against the fact that what is proper and what is true in beauty and in goodness have become mixed up in men's minds. The appraisement of what is proper does not require any degree of culture or natural sensitiveness of mind, and therefore it fetches a ready price in the market, outbids truth, becomes petty in its tyranny and leaves smudges of vulgarity upon things that are precious. To rescue truth from the dungeon of propriety has ever been the mission of poets and artists, but in the time of revolution they are apt to go further by rejecting truth itself.

In our epic *Rāmāyana*, when Prince Rāmachandra won back his wife from the clutches of the giant who had abducted her, his people clamoured for her rejection, suspecting defilement. Similarly in art fastidious men of culture are clamouring for the banishment of the beautiful because she has been allowed to remain so long in the possession of propriety.

THOSE who have their enterprises in the world of Nature, master her forces, becoming rich in wealth and power. The greatest gain which comes across their path in their adventures is moral truth. For power is combination, and all combinations, in order to be perfect, need the help of the moral law, in which individuals acknowledge the universal principle of the good. Moral truth is most needed when men move, and move together.

But laws, whether in Nature where it is physical, or in society where it is moral, are external. They are formal, lacking that deeper mystery of perfectness, which is creation; which is in the beauty of harmony in Nature; which is in the beauty of love in man. Law is the channel of finitude through which things evolve without ceasing, but its meaning lies in its revolution round an inner centre which is infinite. We follow law to live; we reach the centre to find immortality.

FOllowing the interminable current of law, exploring the countless fields of forces and openings of wealth, we talk of endless endeavour but of no ultimate gain. We know that power thrives in moving. When it stumbles against some final object it receives its death-fall. We of all peoples in the world know to our cost that when nations grow weary of their quest, settling down to store up and to arrange their possessions; when with their distrust of new ideas their morals stiffen into conventions, becoming unfit to guide them in the path of life's adventures, keeping them bound to growthless traditions, then they are gradually pushed away from life's high road by the moving forces of history.

But this endlessness of movement in the outer world only proves that there we have no goal to reach and our goal is somewhere else. It is in the inner region of spirit. There our deepest longing is for that peace which rests upon fulfilment. There we meet our God. He is the ever-moving power in the world. He is the ever-reposing love in the soul. God eludes us in Nature to call us onward; in the soul He surrenders Himself to gather us to His heart. This is why, in the realm of power, we grow by aggrandisement; but, in the realm of love, we grow by renunciation. This is why, though in our worldly ambition pride acts as an incentive, it is the greatest of all obstacles in our spiritual aspiration.

IN a lyrical poem, the metre and the idea are blended in one. Treated separately, they reveal themselves as two contrary forces; and instances are common in which their natural antagonism has not been overcome, thus resulting in the production of bad poems.

We are the artists, before whom lie materials which are mutually obstructive. They continually clash, until they develop into a creation perfect in unity. Very often, in order to shirk trouble and secure peace, we sacrifice one of the contending parties. This makes the fight impossible, but also the creation. The restless spirit of nature divorced from the soul's repose drives us to the madness of work which piles up towers of things. On the other hand the spiritual being deprived of its world of reality lives only in the exile of abstraction, creating phantoms in which exaggerations, unchecked by the strict necessities of forms, run riot.

WHEN the man-made world is less an expression of man's creative soul than a mechanical device for some purposes of power, then it hardens and narrows itself, attains too definite a character, leading to proficiency at the cost of the immense suggestiveness of life. In his creative activities man establishes human relationships with his surroundings, making Nature instinct with his own life and love. But with his utilitarian energies he fights Nature, banishes her from his world, deforms and defiles her with the ugliness of his callous ambitions. This world of man's own manufacture with its discordant shrieks and mechanical movements incessantly suggests to him and convinces him of a scheme of universe which is an abstract system, having no touch of the person and therefore no ultimate reality.

WITH the truth of our expression we grow in truth. The truth of art is in the disinterested joy of creation, which is fatally injured when betrayed into a purpose alien to itself. All the great civilisations that have become extinct must have come to their end through some constant wrong expression of humanity; through slavery imposed upon fellow-beings; through parasitism on a gigantic scale bred by wealth, by man's clinging reliance on material resources; through a scoffing spirit of scepticism robbing us of our means of sustenance in the path of truth.

CONSCIOUSNESS is the light by the help of which we travel along our path of life. But we cannot afford to squander this light at every step. Economy we need, and habit is that economy. It enables us to live and think without fully keeping our mind illumined. On festival nights we do not count the cost of our excess of light, because it is not for removing some deficiency, but for expressing the sense of our inner exuberance. And for the same reason habit becomes a sign of poverty in our spiritual life; for it is not a life of necessity, but of expression. In our love, our consciousness has to remain at its brightest, in order to be true. For love is no mere carrying out of some purpose, it is the full illumination of consciousness itself.

IF we allow our act of worship to deaden into a habit, then it frustrates itself, stiffening into mere piety which is a calculated economy of love. For worship has its worth, not in the action, but in a perfect outflow of consciousness in which habit has the tendency of becoming an impediment. We grow worldly in our devotion when we imagine that it confers upon us some special advantage, thus causing pious habits to be formed and valued. For when it is a question of profit, buying in the cheapest market is the best wisdom; but when complete giving out is the sole object, then economy is cheating one's own self.

THREE is one thing which is common in the process of the physical and the spiritual life. In both it is essential that we must forget the self. We know all the better what is around us by not having to remember our own selves at every step. When we are more to ourselves, then the world is less to us. But forgetfulness of self in our ordinary life of usefulness is mostly negative, it is attained by habit. Not so in the spiritual life, where self is forgotten because love is there. It is like the individual word, losing its meaning where it is separate, but regaining itself all the more where it is one with the whole poem. In the spiritual life we forget our exclusive individual purpose and are flooded with the spirit of perfection which through us transcends ourselves. In this we feel our immortality, which is the great meaning of our life.

OUR nature being complex, it is unsafe to generalise about things that are human; and it is an incomplete statement of truth to say that habits have the sole effect of deadening our mind. The habits that are helpful are like a channel, which helps the current to flow. It is open where the water runs onward, guarding it only where it has the danger of deviation. The bee's life in its channel of habit has no opening, —it revolves within a narrow circle of perfection. Man's life has its institutions which are its organised habits. When these act as enclosures, then the result may be perfect, like a beehive of wonderful precision of form, but unsuitable for the mind which has unlimited possibilities of growth.

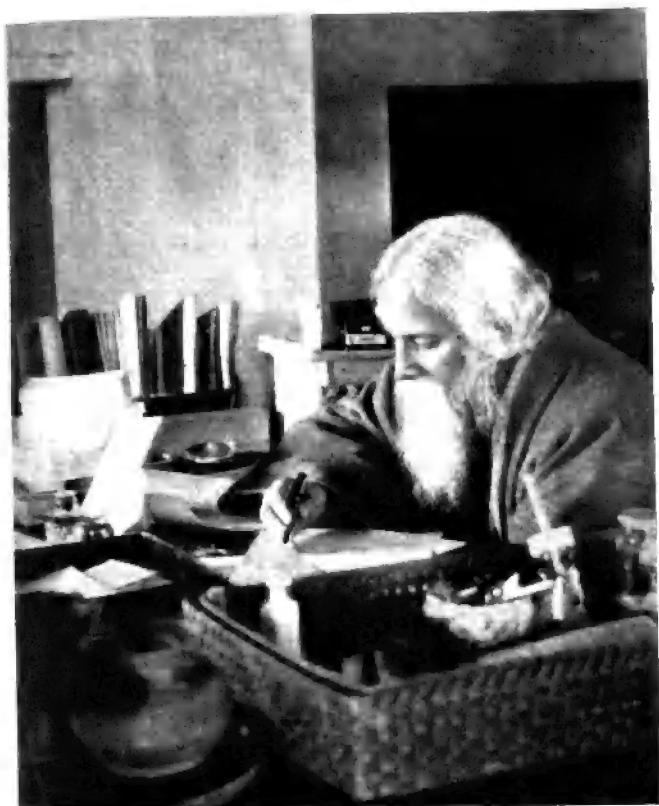
FOR the current of our spiritual life creeds and rituals are channels that may thwart or help according to their fixity or openness. When a symbol of spiritual idea becomes rigidly elaborate in its construction, it supplants the idea which it should support. In art and literature metaphors which are the symbol of our emotional perceptions excite our imagination but do not arrest it. For they never claim a monopoly of our attention; they leave open the way for the endless possibility of other metaphors. They lose their artistic value if they degenerate into fixed habits of expression. Shelley, in his poem of the Skylark, pours out images which we value because they are only a few suggestions of the immeasurability of our enjoyment. But if, because of their fitness and beauty, a law were passed that while thinking about a skylark these images should be treated as final and no others admitted, then Shelley's poem would at once become false; for its truth is in its fluidity, in its modesty, which tacitly admits that it has not the last word.

THE other great body of ours is the world, with which this little body of ours ever aspires to establish a perfect relation of harmony. Is it simply for the sake of some convenience? Do our eyes try to see lest some danger or obstacle should come unawares in the dark, lest we might fail to find the things that are needful? No doubt these are powerful incentives, but the great fact lies in the delight of the meeting of our eyes with the world of lines, colours, and movements. There is an incessant call from this universe of light, of sound, of touch, to our eyes, to our ears, to our limbs, and the response to it is a fulfilment which not only belongs to us, but to the great world. And this is the reason why from remote ages light incessantly knocked at the closed gates of life's blindness, till after repeated efforts life opened its windows of sight, and the union of the two was perfected. This was a wedding whose highest meaning is in its joy.

We have a mental body, which has its organs of thought and feeling. There is the great social mind of man with which it seeks its harmony, for the perfecting of which experiments are carried on without rest. This aspiration also has not its source in expediency. It is an impulse for union which drives our mind across our little home and neighbourhood to its love tryst abroad. It must unite with the great mind of humanity to find its fulfilment. The beehive is the product of the truth of the unity in the bee's life; but literature, art, and politics, moral laws and religions, which have no end to their freedom of growth, are born of the wedding of the man with Man.

THE question is asked, if life's journey be endless where is its goal? The answer is, it is everywhere. We are in a palace which has no end, but which we have reached. By exploring it and extending our relationship with it we are ever making it more and more our own. The infant is born in the same universe where lives the adult of ripe mind. But its position is not like a schoolboy who has yet to learn his alphabet, finding himself in a college class. The infant has its own joy of life because the world is not a mere road, but a home, of which it will have more and more as it grows up in wisdom. With our road the gain is at the end, but with this world of ours the gain is at every step; for it is the road and the home in one; it leads us on yet gives us shelter.

OUR life in the world is like listening to a song, to enjoy which we do not wait till it is finished. The song is there, in the singing from the very first note. Its unity permeates all its parts and therefore we do not impatiently seek the end, but follow the development. In the same way, because the world is truly one its parts do not tire us—only, our joy grows in depth with our deeper comprehension of its unity. At the moment when our various energies are employed with the varied in the world of Nature and of man, the One in us is growing up towards the One in all. If the many and the one, the endless movement and the eternal reaching of the goal, were not in harmony in our being, our existence would be to us like ever learning grammar, and yet never coming to know any language.



THE POET IN HIS STUDY AT SANTINIKETAN

PART III

NATURE is a mistress who tempts us with liberal wages—so much so, that we work extra hours for the extra remuneration. Yet in the midst of this bribery and these temptations man still cries for deliverance. For he knows that he is not a born slave and he refuses to be deluded into believing that to follow one's own desires unhindered is freedom. His real trust lies in his growth and not in his accumulations. The consciousness of a great inner truth lifts man from his surroundings of petty moments into the region of the eternal. It is the sense of something positive in himself for which he renounces his wealth, reputation, and life itself, and throws aside the scholar's book of logic, becoming simple as a child in his wisdom.

IN fact, man wants to reach that inner region where he can take his stand in the perfection of his unity, and not there where link upon link is forged, in an endless series, in the chain of things and events.

But as our body seeks its harmony with the great world-body for its fulfilment, so the One in us seeks its union with the great One. The One in us knows itself, has its delight in itself and expresses itself in its activities. It is truth and joy and expression. Therefore its union with the highest One must be in wisdom, in love, and in service. This is our religion, that is to say, our higher nature. Its purposes cannot be definitely pointed out and explained, for it belongs to that life in the spiritual world where our objects have their recognition in something which we vaguely try to describe as blessedness,—a state of perfection, which is an end in itself. It is easy for man to ignore it and yet live, but man never *did* ignore it. He doubts it, mocks it, and strikes it, he fails in his realisation of it, but even in his failures and rebellions, in his desperate attempts to escape from it, he revolves round this one great truth.

A BLOCK of stone is unplastic, insensitive, inert, it offers resistance to the creative idea of the artist. But for a sculptor its very obstacles are an advantage and he carves his image out of it. Our physical existence is an obstacle to our spirit, it has every aspect of a bondage, and to all appearance it is a perpetual humiliation to our soul. And therefore it is the best material for our soul to manifest herself through it, to proclaim her freedom by fashioning her ornaments out of her fetters. The limitations of our outer circumstances are only to give opportunities to our soul, and by being able to defy them she realises her truth.

OUR living body in its relations to the physical world has its various wishes. These are to eat, to sleep, to keep warm or cool, as necessity demands—and many others. But it has one permanent wish, which is deeper and therefore hidden. It is the wish for health. It works every moment, fighting diseases and making constant adjustments with changing circumstances. The greater proportion of its activities are carried on behind our consciousness. He who has wisdom in regard to his physical welfare knows this and tries to establish harmony between the bodily desires that are conscious and this one desire which is latent. And he willingly sacrifices the claims of his appetites to the higher claim of his health.

We have our social body in which we come into relation with other men. Its obvious wishes are those that are connected with our selfish impulses. We want to get more than others and pay less than is our due. But there is another wish, deeply inherent in our social life, which is concerned with the welfare of the community. He who has social wisdom knows this and tries to bring all his clamorous wishes about personal pleasure, comfort, and freedom under the dominion of this hidden wish for the good of others.

Likewise the obvious wish of our soul is to realise the distinction of its individuality, but it has its inherent wish to surrender itself in love to the Great Soul.

The wish for health takes into account the future of the body. The wish for the social good also has its outlook upon the time to come. They face the infinite. The wish of our soul to be one in love with the Great Soul transcends all limitations. Thus in our body,

society, and soul we find on the surface the activity of numerous wishes and in their depth that of the one will which gives these wishes unity, leading them to peace, goodness, and love. In other words, on the one hand we have the wishes of the moment, and on the other the wish for the eternal. It is the function of our soul to unite these two and build its heaven upon the foundation of the earth.

A YOUNG friend of mine comes to me this morning to inform me that it is his birthday and that he has just reached his nineteenth year. The distance between my age and his is great, and yet when I look at him it is not the incompleteness of his life which strikes me, but something which is complete in his youth. And in this differs the thing which grows, from the thing which is being made. A building in its unfinished stage is only too evidently unfinished. But in life's growth every stage has its perfection, the flower as well as the fruit.

WHEN I was a child, God also became a child with me to be my playmate. Otherwise my imperfections would have weighed me down, and every moment it would have been a misery to be and yet not fully to be. The things that kept me occupied were trifling and the things I played with were made of dust and sticks. But nevertheless my occupations were made precious to me, and the importance that was given to my toys made them of equal value with the playthings of the adult. The majesty of childhood won for me the world's homage, because there was revealed the infinite in its aspect of the small.

And the reason is the same, which gives the youth the right to claim his full due and not to be despised. The divinity which is ever young has crowned him with his own wreath, whispering to his ears that he is the rightful inheritor of all the world's wealth.

The infinite is with us in the beauty of our childhood, in the strength of our youth, in the wisdom of our age; in play, in earning, and in spending.

THE beauty which is in this evening sky comprehends forces tremendous in their awfulness. Yet it reveals to us the harmony which must be in the centre of all world activities, the harmony which has a still voice which is music itself. Because we are able to take view of this evening world where the distant and the near are brought face to face, we can see what is positively true in it—its beauty and unfathomable peace. When, through death, the deathlessness of some great life is discovered, the same vision of peace is revealed to us. The profound soul of Buddha is brought before our minds like this evening sky, and through all his struggles and sorrows, through his compassionate toil for men, we see a perfect assurance and repose of strength which is beauty. In smaller men the field of life is too narrow and therefore contradictions are too exaggerated to permit us any complete view of truth. But we may be sure that in the currents of their lives as they run beyond death these contradictions are harmonised; for truth is over all, and beauty is the expression of truth.

IN the *Upanishad* God is described as "The Peaceful, the Good, the One". His peace is the peace of truth which we clearly see in Nature. The earth moves and the stars, every cell is moving and working in this tree, every blade of grass in this field is busy, and every atom of this evening star is restless, but peace is in the heart of all this movement—this movement which is creative. The movement which lacks this inner peace destroys. God, as the Peaceful, is revealed to him who has attained truth in his life, the truth which is ever active and yet which has an immensity of repose born of the mastery of self. It is not the loss of energy, the waning of life, which is peace, but their perfection.

An ignorant man finding himself in a factory for the first time in his life, is frightened at the bewildering medley of movements, but he who knows it is struck with admiration at the concentration of purpose dwelling in its centre, unmoved. This takes away all misgivings, and the perfect correlation of activities appears as beautiful. This is the peace which belongs to truth.

LIFE is a flow of harmony that unites the in and the out, the end and the means, the what is and the what is to come. Life does not store up but assimilates, does not construct but creates, its work and itself are never dissociated. When the materials of our surroundings are not living, when they are fixed habits and hoarded possessions, then our life and our world become separated and their mutual discord ends in the destruction of both. Or when some unbalanced excess of passion takes predominance in the buildings of our own world, its distribution of weight goes wrong, and it constantly oppresses the wholeness of our life. The source of all the great evils in society, in government, in other organisations is in the alienation of the living being from its outer habitation.

THE world of senses in which animals live is limited. Our reason has opened the gate for our mind into the heart of the infinite. Yet this freedom of reason is but a freedom in the outer courtyard of existence. Objects of knowledge maintain an infinite distance from us who are the knowers. For knowledge is not union. Therefore the further world of freedom awaits us there where we reach truth, not through feeling it by senses or knowing it by reason, but through union of perfect sympathy. This is an emancipation difficult fully to imagine; we have but glimpses of its character. We perceive the fact of a picture by seeing it; we know about it by measuring its lines, analysing its colours and studying the laws of harmony in its composition. But even then it is no realisation of the picture, for which we want an intimate union with it immediate to ourselves.

THE picture of a flower in a botanical book is an information; its mission ends with our knowledge. But in pure art it is a personal communication. And therefore until it finds its harmony in the depth of our personality it misses its mark. We can treat existence solely as a text-book furnishing us lessons and we shall not be disappointed. But we know that there its mission does not end. For by our joy in it, which is an end in itself, we feel that it is a communication, the final response to which is not the response of our knowing but the response of our being.

WHEN Buddha preached *Maitri*--the relationship of harmony--not only with human beings but with all creation, did he not have this truth in his mind, that our treatment of the world is wrong when we solely treat it as a fact which can be known and used? Did he not feel that its meaning can be attained only through love, because it is an expression of love which waits for its answer from our soul emancipated from the bondage of self? This emancipation cannot be negative in character, for love can never lead to negation. The perfect freedom is in a perfect harmony of relationship and not in a mere severance of bondage. Freedom has no content, and therefore no meaning, where it has nothing but itself. Soul's emancipation is in the fulfilment of its relation to the central truth of everything that there is, which is impossible to define because it is in the end of all definitions.

No flame burns for ever. Light goes out for want of oil, is puffed out by the wind, often the lamp itself is shattered. In our fit of irritation we may say that the power of darkness is final and true, or that we create light ourselves by lighting the lamp. But the truth is that every extinction of light is to prove that the source of light is without end, and man's true power lies only in his ability to prove this over and over again.

I BELIEVE that there is an ideal hovering over and permeating the earth,—an ideal of that Paradise which is not the mere outcome of fancy, but the ultimate reality in which all things are and towards which all things are moving. I believe that this vision of Paradise is to be seen in the sunlight, and the green of the earth, in the flowing streams, in the gladness of springtime, the repose of a winter morning, in the beauty of a human face and the wealth of human love. Everywhere in this earth the spirit of Paradise is awake and sending forth its voice. It reaches our inner ears without our knowing it. It tunes our harp of life, urging us to send our aspiration beyond the finite, as flowers send their perfume into the air and birds their songs.

OUR energies are employed in supplying ourselves with things and pleasures. They have no eternity in their background. Therefore we try to give things an appearance of permanence by making them big. Man in his anxiety to prolong his pleasure and power tries to make additions, and we are afraid to stop, because we fear that they must some day come to an end.

But truth is not afraid to be small, to come to an end,—just as a poem, when it is finished, is not really dead. Not because a poem is composed of endless lines, but because it carries an ideal of perfection. The pauses of truth have the cadence of the infinite, its disappearances are the processional arches on its path of immortality.

WE light the lamp in our room which creates a seeming opposition between it and the great outside world. Our life on the earth is like that small room in which our consciousness has been concentrated. And we imagine that outside it lies death which opposes it. But the one indivisible truth of existence which is for us must not be doubted because our life obscures it for a moment.

THE vision of life which we see in the world is a vision of joy. The joy is in its ever-flowing colour, music and dance. If there were truth in death this spirit of joy would vanish from the heart of existence. The lamp we light in the night has a wick which is small and oil which is very little. But there is no timidness in its tiny flame, burning as it is in the heart of an immense darkness; for the truth of the light which sustains it is infinite.

THE world, like a stream of sounds in music, is a perpetual flow of forces and forms, and therefore from the outside it has an aspect of impermanence. There it represents death, being a continual current of losses. But the loss is only for the channel, the instrument through which music is made to pass. It is the unity of melody which ever survives the fleeting notes. If individual notes could claim a prolonged endlessness, then they would miss their true eternity which is the music. The desert has the quality of the immutable because it lacks life. In a soil which is fruitful, life reveals its immortality by its ceaseless passage through death.

IT is given to us to reveal our soul, that which is One in us, which is eternal. This can only be done by its passage through the fleeting Many; to assert the infinity of the spirit by continual sacrifice of forms. The self being the vessel that gathers and holds gives us the opportunity of giving up. If we believe only in self, then we anxiously cling to our stores, which causes us misery and failure. When we believe in soul the very inconstancy of life finds its eternal meaning and we feel that we can afford to lose.

THAT which I value most in my religion or my aspiration, I seek to find corroborated, in its fundamental unity, in other great religions, or in the hopes expressed in the history of other peoples. Each great movement of thought and endeavour in any part of the world may have something unique in its expression, but the truth underlying any of them never has the meretricious cheapness of utter novelty about it. The great Ganges must not hesitate to declare its essential similarity to the Nile of Egypt, or to the Yangtse-Kiang of China.

I BLEW out the lamp with the idea of turning into bed. No sooner had I done so than, through the open windows, the moonlight burst into the room, with a shock of surprise.

That little bit of a lamp had been sneering dryly at me, like some Mephistopheles: and that tiniest sneer had screened off this infinite light of joy issuing forth from the deep love which is in all the world.

If I had gone off to bed leaving the shutters closed, and thus missed this vision, it would have stayed there all the same without any protest against the mocking lamp inside. Even if I had remained blind to it all my life,—letting the lamp triumph to the end,—till for the last time I went darkling to bed,—even then the moon would have still been there, sweetly smiling unperturbed and unobstructive, waiting for me as she has throughout the ages.

IN our highly complex modern civilisation, mechanical forces are organised with such efficiency that the materials produced grow far in advance of man's selective and assimilative capacity to simplify them into harmony with his nature and needs. Such an intemperate overgrowth of things, like the rank vegetation of the tropics, creates confinement for man. The nest is simple, it has an easy relationship with the sky; the cage is complex and costly, it is too much itself, excommunicating whatever lies outside. And modern man is busy building his cage, fast developing his parasitism on the monster *Thing*, which he allows to envelop him on all sides. He is always occupied in adapting himself to its dead angularities, limits himself to its limitations, and merely becomes a part of it.

LIKE the position of the earth, in the course of its diurnal and annual motions, man's life, at any moment, must be the reconciliation of its two movements,—one round the centre of its own personality, and another whose centre is in a luminous ideal comprehending the whole human world. The international endeavours of a people must carry the movement of the people's own personality round the great spirit of man. The inspiration must be its own, which is to help it in its aspiration towards fulfilment. Otherwise, mere cosmopolitanism drifts on the waves, buffeted by wind from all quarters, in an imbecility of movement which has no progress.

ALL civilisations are creations. They do not merely offer us information about themselves, but give outer expression to some inner ideals which are creative. Therefore we judge each civilisation, not by how much it has produced, but by what idea it expresses in its activities. When, in things which are creation, the structure gets the better of the spirit, then it is condemned. When a civilisation merely gives a large stock of facts about its own productions, its mechanical parts, its outward successes, then we know that there must be anarchy in its world of idea, that some living part is lacking, that it will be torn with conflicts and will not be able to hold together human society in the spirit of truth.

IN the realm of Biology man and beast are not distinct; as there viewed, self-preservation and race preservation are of equal importance in the nature of both. But man's spirit fails to find in these features the true significance of man. So, however deep-seated or widespread man's desire to dine may be, his literature has but scanty recognition of it. Man's eating propensity may be an insistence, but it is not a significant truth; that is why the satisfaction of his hunger is not one of the joys that have found a place in the paradise of his art-world.

The sexual relationship of man and woman stands on a higher plane than man's appetite for food, for it has achieved an intimate connection with the relationship of hearts. The sex instinct which, in a basic view of life, has only a secondary place, has risen, in the sex relations of the larger life of man, to a position transcending even the primary; for love illuminates man, within and without, into a supreme intensity of consciousness. That illumination is lacking in the primitive principle of race preservation, which therefore assumes importance only on the plane of science. The union of hearts, as seen by us, is abstracted from the primitive needs of Nature into the glory of its own finality. And hence it has come to occupy so vast a place in Literature and the Arts.

THREE comes at last a day when the emancipated soul steps out of all bonds to face the Supreme Soul. Having fulfilled the demands of all worldly relations, it must now prepare for the gain of new relations with the Infinite. Just as a good housewife, while dealing with diverse men and things in the course of her duties, is after all doing the work of her husband's household all the time, acknowledging at every step her relationship with him,—yet, at the end of the day, she puts aside all such work, performs her toilet afresh and, thus purified and rejoicing, betakes herself alone with her husband to the privacy of their own particular chamber,—so does the soul, whose world-work is done, put away all finite matters and comes all alone to its communion with the Beloved, finding in that consummation the perfection of its own life.

SIGNS of nasty weather, at the very start of a journey, make one's whole being wilt. Our intellect is modern and staunch; it refuses to acknowledge omens. But our blood is full of old-time fears and anxieties, which, like the waves beyond the enclosure, will not be quieted, and keep knocking against and leaping over our reasoned conclusions. The intellect has ensconced itself behind barriers of reason, out of touch with the inarticulate voices of the universe. The blood has remained outside; on it fall the shadow of the clouds and the surge of far-away bilows; the piping of the wind makes it dance, and its moods respond to the play of light and shade,—so that when the elements are unkind it cannot help being disconsolate.

JUST as it does not do to have the writer entirely removed from the feeling to which he is giving expression, so also it does not conduce to the truest poetry to have him too close to it. Memory is the brush which can best lay on the true poetic colour. Nearness has too much of the compelling about it, and the imagination is not sufficiently free unless it can get away from its influence. Not only in poetry, but in all art, the mind of the artist must attain a certain degree of aloofness—the *creator* within man must be allowed the sole control. If the subject matter gets the better of the creation, the result is a mere replica of the event, not a reflection of it through the artist's mind.

To be able to love material things, to clothe them with tender grace, and yet not be attached to them, this is a great service. Providence expects that we should make this world our own, and not live in it as though it were a rented tenement. We can only make it our own by some service, and that service is to lend it love and beauty from our soul. From your own experience you can see the difference between the beautiful, the tender, the hospitable: and the mechanically neat and monotonously useful.

WHEN the store of energy runs low, a cheap asceticism supervenes. The type of renunciation that results, means only a shaking off of responsibility from one's own shoulders, a fatalistic submission to discomfort, disorder, disease, or whatever else it may be. Consolation is then sought in the attempt to make out that there is something glorious in such submission. On the other hand, he who has abundance of energy takes delight in accepting the challenge of strenuous aims; he lives forcefully.

CIVILISATION cannot merely be a growing totality of happenings that by chance have assumed a particular shape and tendency which we consider to be excellent. It must be the expression of some guiding moral force which we have evolved in our society for the object of attaining perfection. The word "perfection" has a simple and definite meaning applied to an inanimate thing, or even to a creature whose life has principally a biological significance. But man being complex and always on the path of transcending himself, the meaning of the word "perfection" cannot be crystallised into an inflexible idea. This has made it possible for different races to have different shades of definition for this term.

THAT which merely gives us information can be explained in terms of measurement, but that which gives us joy cannot be explained by the facts of a mere grouping of atoms and molecules. Somewhere in the arrangement of this world there seems to be a great concern about giving us delight, which shows that, in the universe, over and above the meaning of matter and force, there is a message conveyed through the magic touch of personality. This touch cannot be analysed, it can only be felt.

WHATEVER I truly think, truly feel, truly realise, its natural destiny is to find true expression. There is some force in me which continually works towards that end, but is not mine alone,—it permeates the universe. When this universal force is manifested within an individual, it is beyond his control and acts according to its own nature; and in surrendering our lives to its power is our greatest joy. It not only gives us expression, but also sensitiveness and love; this makes our feelings so fresh to us every time, so full of wonder.

THE more one lives alone on the river or in the open country, the clearer it becomes that nothing is more beautiful or great than to perform the ordinary duties of one's daily life simply and naturally. From the grasses in the field to the stars in the sky, each one is doing just that; and there is such profound peace and surpassing beauty in Nature because none of these tries forcibly to transgress its limitations.

Yet what each one does is by no means of little moment. The grass has to put forth all its energy to draw sustenance from the uttermost tips of its rootlets simply to grow where it is as grass; it does not vainly strive to become a banyan tree; and so the earth gains a lovely carpet of green. And, indeed, what little of beauty and peace is to be found in the societies of men is owing to the daily performance of small duties, not to big doing and fine talk.

THINGS of vital importance to society should never become too difficult of comprehension for the average intelligence of the people. For that creates a profound chasm between life's own need and the means of its satisfaction; and in that gaping hole all kinds of mischiefs find their lodging, because it is beyond the reach of the entire mind of the people. The vast dimensions and the technical character of our present-day written legal codes only prove what an elaborately painful arrangement of chains and screws, requiring expert help at every turn, is necessary to keep the lumbering modern deadness together.

THREE are truths which are of the nature of information, that can be added to our stock of knowledge from the outside. But there are other truths of the nature of inspiration, which cannot be used to swell the number of our accomplishments. These latter are not like food, but are rather the appetite itself, that can only be strengthened by inducing harmony in our bodily functions. Religion is such a truth. It establishes the right centre for life's activities, giving them an eternal meaning. It maintains the true standard of value for the objects of our striving and inspires in us the spirit of renunciation which is the spirit of humanity.

JUST as health is a condition of man's whole body, so is religion of his whole nature. Health cannot be given in the same way as money is put into one's palm. But it may be induced by bringing about suitable conditions. Religious teaching, likewise, cannot be left to a school committee to be put on their syllabus along with Arithmetic and Euclid. No school inspector will be able to measure its progress. No examiner's blue pencil can assign it proper marks. An appropriate environment must be created in which religion may have its natural growth.

THE negative process of curbing desire and controlling passion is only for saving our energy from dissipation and directing it into its proper channel. If the path of the channel we have chosen runs withinwards, it also must have its expression in action, not for any ulterior reward, but for the proving of its own truth. If the test of action is removed, if our realisation grows purely subjective, then it may become like travelling in a desert in the night, going round and round the same circle, imagining all the while that we are following the straight path of progress.

LOVE lights up this world with its meaning and makes life feel that it has everywhere that "enough" which truly is its "feast". I know men who preach the cult of simple life by glorifying the spiritual merit of poverty. I refuse to imagine any special value in poverty when it is a mere negation. Only when the mind has the sensitiveness to be able to respond to the deeper call of reality is it naturally weaned away from the lure of the fictitious value of things. It is callousness which robs us of our simple power to enjoy and dooms us to the indignity of a snobbish pride in furniture and the foolish burden of expensive things. But to pit the callousness of asceticism against the callousness of luxury is merely fighting one evil with the help of another, inviting the pitiless demon of the desert in place of the indiscriminate demon of the jungle.

We may not know exactly what is happening; we do not know exactly even about a speck of dust. But when we feel the flow of life in us to be one with the universal life outside, then all our pleasures and pains are seen strung upon one long thread of joy. The facts: I am, I move, I grow, are seen in all their immensity in connection with the fact that everything else is there along with me and not the tiniest atom can do without me.

The relation of my soul to this beautiful autumn morning, this vast radiance, is one of intimate kinship; and all this colour, scent, and music is but the outward expression of our secret communion. This constant communion, whether realised or unrealised, keeps my mind in movement; out of this intercourse between my inner and outer worlds I gain such religion, be it much or little, as my capacity allows: and in its light I have to test scriptures before I can make them really my own.

FROM age to age, thereafter, have I been diversely reborn on this earth. So whenever we now sit face to face, alone together, various ancient memories, gradually, one after another come back to me.

My mother earth sits to-day in the cornfields by the river-side, in her raiment of sunlit gold; and near her feet, her knees, her lap, I roll about and play. Mother has a multitude of children; she attends but absently to their constant calls on her, with an immense patience, but also with a certain aloofness. She is seated there, with her far-away look fastened on the verge of the afternoon sky, while I keep chattering on untiringly.

A TEACHER can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. The teacher who has come to the end of his subject, who has no living traffic with his knowledge, but merely repeats his lessons to his students, can only load their minds; he cannot quicken them. Truth not only must inform but also inspire. If the inspiration dies out, and the information only accumulates, then truth loses its infinity. The greater part of our learning in the schools has been wasted because, for most of our teachers, their subjects are like dead specimens of once living things, with which they have a learned acquaintance, but no communication of life and love.



THE POET AT SANTINIKETAN

PART IV

TH E question why there is evil in existence is the same as why there is imperfection, or, in other words, why there is creation at all. We must take it for granted that it could not be otherwise; that creation must be imperfect, must be gradual, and that it is futile to ask the question, "Why are we?"

But this is the real question we ought to ask: Is this imperfection the final truth, is evil absolute and ultimate? The river has its boundaries, its banks, but is a river all banks? or are the banks the final facts about the river? Do not these obstructions themselves give its water an onward motion? The towing-rope binds a boat, but is the bondage its meaning? Does it not at the same time draw the boat forward?

THE current of the world has its boundaries, otherwise it could have no existence, but its purpose is not shown in the boundaries which restrain it, but in its movement, which is towards perfection. The wonder is not that there should be obstacles and sufferings in this world, but that there should be law and order, beauty and joy, goodness and love.

The idea of God that man has in his being is the wonder of all wonders. He has felt in the depths of his life that what appears as imperfect is the manifestation of the perfect, just as a man who has an ear for music realises the perfection of a song, while in fact he is only listening to a succession of notes. Man has found out the great paradox, that what is limited is not imprisoned within its limits, it is ever moving, and therewith shedding its finitude every moment. In fact, imperfection is not a negation of perfectness, finitude is not contradictory to infinity; they are but completeness manifested in parts, infinity revealed within bounds.

PAIN, which is the feeling of our finiteness, is not a fixture in our life. It is not an end in itself, as joy is. To meet with it is to know that it has no part in the true permanence of creation. It is what error is in our intellectual life. To go through the history of the development of science is to go through the maze of mistakes which it made current at different times. Yet no one really believes that science is the one perfect mode of disseminating mistakes. The progressive ascertainment of truth is the important thing to remember in the history of science, not its innumerable mistakes. Error, by its nature, cannot be stationary, it cannot remain with truth; like a tramp, it must quit its lodging as soon as it fails to pay its score to the full.

WHEN science collects facts to illustrate the struggle for existence that is going on in the animal kingdom, it raises a picture in our minds of "Nature red in tooth and claw". But in these mental pictures we give a fixity to colours and forms which are really evanescent. It is like calculating the weight of the air on each square inch of our body to prove that it must be crushingly heavy for us. With every weight, however, there is an adjustment, and we lightly bear our burden. With the struggle for existence in Nature there is reciprocity. There is the love for children and for comrades; there is the sacrifice of self, which springs from love; and this love is the positive element in life.

If we kept the searchlight of our observation turned upon the fact of death, the world would appear to us like a huge charnel-house; but in the world of life the thought of death has, we find, the least possible hold upon our minds. Not because it is the least apparent, but because it is the negative aspect of life; just as, in spite of the fact that we shut our eyelids every second, it is the openings of the eyes that count. Life as a whole never takes death seriously. It laughs, dances, and plays; it builds, hoards, and loves in death's face. Only when we detach one individual fact of death do we see its blankness and become dismayed. We lose sight of the wholeness of a life of which death is part. It is like looking at a piece of cloth through a microscope. It appears like a net; we gaze at the big holes and shiver in imagination. But the truth is, death is not the ultimate reality. It looks black, as the sky looks blue; but it does not blacken existence, just as the sky does not leave its stain upon the wings of the bird.

AN imperfection which is not all imperfection, but which has perfection for its ideal, must go through a perpetual realisation. Thus, it is the function of our intellect to realise the truth through untruths, and knowledge is nothing but the continually burning up of error to set free the light of truth. Our will, our character, has to attain perfection by continually overcoming evils, either inside or outside us, or both; our physical life is consuming materials every moment to maintain the life fire; and our moral life, too, has its fuel to burn. This life process is going on—we know it, we have felt it; and we have a faith, which no individual instances to the contrary can shake, that the direction of humanity is from evil to good. For we feel that good is the positive element in man's nature, and in every age and every clime what man values most is his ideal of goodness. We have known the good, we have loved it, and we have paid our highest reverence to men who have shown in their lives what goodness is.

It is pain which is our true wealth as imperfect beings, and has made us great and worthy to take our seat with the perfect. He who has realised this knows that we are not beggars; that it is the hard coin which must be paid for everything valuable in this life, for our power, our wisdom, our love; that in pain is symbolised the infinite possibility of perfection, the eternal unfolding of joy; and the man who loses all pleasure in accepting pain sinks down and down, to the lowest depth of penury and degradation. It is only when we invoke the aid of pain for our self-gratification that she becomes evil and takes her vengeance for the insult done to her by hurling us into misery. For she is the vestal virgin consecrated to the service of the immortal perfection, and when she takes her true place before the altar of the infinite she casts off her dark veil and bares her face to the beholder as revelation of supreme joy.

FORTUNATELY for man the easiest path is not his truest path. If his nature were not as complex as it is, if it were as simple as that of a pack of hungry wolves, then, by this time, those hordes of marauders would have overrun the whole earth. But man, when confronted with difficulties, has to acknowledge that he is man, that he has his responsibilities to the higher faculties of his nature, by ignoring which he may achieve success that is immediate, perhaps, but that will become a death-trap to him. For what are obstacles to the lower creatures are opportunities to the higher life of man.

TRUE I also hear the great cry of pain ringing through the universe,—a cry that fills the firmament, the foundation whereon the universe is built, which in Vedic India was called the *krandasi*. This cry, however, is not the tired wail of the defeated, but rather the call of the new-born, thus loudly announcing its advent at the door of the universe, seeking hospitality of the eternal future. The proclaiming of new birth is always a cry of pain, for it implies a sundering of former bonds, a bursting through former coverings. The right to a new existence is not lightly gained, it has to be striven and fought for.

ALL broken truths are evil. They hurt because they suggest something which they do not offer. Death does not hurt us, but disease does, because disease constantly reminds us of health and yet withholds it from us. And life in a half-world is evil, because it feigns finality when it is obviously incomplete, giving us the cup, but not the draught of life. All tragedies consist in truth remaining a fragment, its cycle not being completed.

TH E chicken within the egg has rudimentary wings, rudimentary eyesight and legs. These are of no use while the chick is still in the shell. But some chicks, let us suppose, even while there, might feel that there must be a realm beyond where they can make full use of their potential faculties. Other chicks, again, being rationalists or logicians, might argue that there was no life beyond the shell. Human beings are likewise divided into those who have faith in the life beyond the shell, and those who have not; those who believe that we have faculties which are not to be accounted for by the intellect alone, and those who do not.

ONE may imagine that an individual who succeeds in dissociating himself from his fellows attains real freedom, inasmuch as all ties of relationship imply obligation to others. But we know that, though it may sound paradoxical, it is true that in the human world only a perfect arrangement of interdependence gives rise to freedom. The most individualistic of human beings, who own no responsibility, are the savages who fail to attain their fullness of manifestation. They have become immersed in obscurity, like an ill-lighted fire that cannot liberate itself from its envelope of smoke. Only those attain their freedom from the segregation of an eclipsed life, who have the power to cultivate mutual understanding and co-operation. The history of the growth of freedom is the history of the perfection of human relationship.

WHAT is it in man that asserts its immortality in spite of the obvious fact of death? It is not his physical body or his mental organisation. It is that deeper unity, that ultimate mystery in him, which, from the centre of his world, radiates towards its circumference; which is in his mind, yet grows beyond his mind; which, through the things belonging to him, expresses something that is not in them; which, while occupying his present, overflows its banks of the past and the future. It is the personality of a man, conscious of its inexhaustible abundance; it has the paradox in it that it is more than itself; it is more than as it is seen, as it is known, as it is used.

WHEN a man begins to have an extended vision of his true self, when he realises that he is much more than at present he seems to be, he begins to get conscious of his moral nature. Then he grows aware of that which he is yet to be, and the state not yet experienced by him becomes more real than that under his direct experience. Necessarily, his perspective of life changes, and his will takes the place of his wishes. For will is the supreme wish of the larger life, the life whose greater portion is out of our present reach, whose objects are not for the most part before our sight.

GRWTH is not that enlargement which is merely adding to the dimensions of incompleteness. Growth is the movement of a whole towards a yet fuller wholeness. Living things start with this wholeness from the beginning of their career. A child has its own perfection as a child; it would be ugly if it appeared as an unfinished man. Life is a continual process of synthesis, and not of additions. Our activities of production and enjoyment of wealth attain that spirit of wholeness when they are blended with a creative ideal. Otherwise they have the insane aspect of the eternally unfinished; they become like locomotive engines which have railway lines but no stations; which rush on towards a collision of uncontrolled forces or to a sudden breakdown of the overstrained machinery.

It has been said in our scriptures “*atithi devo bhava*”, asking us to realise that “the Divine comes to us as our guest”, claiming our homage. All that is great and true in humanity is ever waiting at our gate to be invited. It is not for us to question it about the country to which it belongs, but to receive it in our home and bring before it the best that we have. We are told in Kalidása’s drama, how Sakuntala, absorbed in her passionate love for Dushyanta, sat dreaming only of that which was the immediate object of her desire. She allowed the Guest to go away, unwelcomed and unattended. Therefore the curse fell on her that “she should not realise her desire for the sake of which she neglected her duty”. When she forgot to pay her attention to him who was for her the representative of the large world of men, she lost her own little world of dreams.

LIFE is original; it is adventurous; it seeks itself in endless experiments, the outcome of its spontaneous creative impulse. The people who passively lend themselves to imitation prove that life has lost its best claim on their hearts. It is the temptation of *Māra*, the evil spirit of Untruth, which whispers to us that we can be better than we are by seeming to be something else. . . . Our subconscious self has the accumulation of ages of creative memory, wherein has grown in secret the racial genius which creates. The whole current of a people's history generates its own special energy of guidance in this region lying beneath the surface-consciousness of our mind. This is why, when we try to imitate some other people's history, we remain so pathetically unaware of the absurdities that are produced.

IN our own days, through the advance of modern science, the rapid transport of modern times has altered the past situation irrevocably. The physical barriers between man and man are overcome; only the barriers of habit remain. But men go on living as though the old limitations were still real. In place of the natural obstacles of the past, they put up their own artificial modes of exclusion—their armaments, their prohibitive tariffs, their passport regulations, their national politics and diplomacies. These new obstructions, being artificial, are burdens that crush the people under the weight of their dead material and create deformities in their moral nature.

The mentality of the world has to be changed in order to meet the new environment of the modern age. Otherwise we shall never attain that peace which is the infinite atmosphere of Truth.

MAN has a feeling that in him the creative manifestation of life has come to the end of a cycle, ready to ascend to one still wider and higher. When life first evolved its physical senses from the depth of amorphous darkness, it came to a wondrous world of forms, and this adventurous spirit of life is yet urging the spirit within man to develop an inner vision which will lead him through these endless forms into a world of infinite meaning, where he will cross the boundaries of the senses to a freedom which is ineffable.

IT is well known that when greed has for its object material gain, then it can have no end. It is like the chasing of the horizon by a lunatic. To go on in a competition of multiplying millions is a steeple-chase of insensate futility, that has obstacles but no goal. It has for its parallel the fight with material weapons, weapons which must perpetually be multiplied, opening up new vistas of destruction, and evoking new forms of insanity in the forging of frightfulness.

ACCORDING to India's ideal, even the home must be given up in due course, in quest of the Infinite,—the household, in fact, is only to be set up as an important stage in this quest. Even to-day, we see our householders, when their children are grown up, leaving their home to spend the rest of their life in some place of pilgrimage. Here is another pair of opposites which India attempted to reconcile. On the one hand, her civilisation is essentially bound up in the home, albeit a home in which a wide circle of relationships find their place. On the other, its endeavour is, one by one, to snap all earthly ties in its pursuit of the liberation of the soul. In fact, it recognises the social bonds because it is only through their acceptance that they can be transcended. In order to get rid of the natural desires of man, they must be used up; that is to say, guided by the spirit of renunciation to their own extinction.

IBELIEVE it is not an uncommon experience for us to come to moments of perfect mental detachment, when the soul seems to flow into the things that are before it, when a tree standing in our view comes as intimately close to us as our breath itself. It is not a state of blurred perception, but of freed consciousness overflowing its banks of mind—drowning the facts of things and finding its way into the truth which is their spirit.

LIFE was but feeble when it first hoisted its own banner of revolt. Immense, ponderous, adamantine, Matter stood around, bludgeon in hand, seeking to keep it confined within the closed doors and windows of its prison walls of dust. But the rebel, Life, was not to be intimidated. Innumerable are the holes it is driving in those walls, making way for the light from every side. No creature has advanced so far as man, in this cult of rebellion that is of the essence of Being. And those races of men in whom this capacity for rebellion has been the strongest and the most irrepressible, have dominated history from age to age, not merely by the extent, but also by the intensity of their existence.

CREATIVE expressions attain their perfect form through emotions modulated. Woman has that expression natural to her—a cadence of restraint in her behaviour, producing poetry of life. She has been an inspiration to man, guiding most often unconsciously his restless energy into an immense variety of creations in literature, art, music, and religion. This is why, in India, woman has been described as the symbol of Shakti, the creative power.

WE rarely realise how false for us is that which we hear from other lips, or keep repeating with our own, while all the time the temple of our Truth is being built within us, brick by brick, day after day. We fail to understand the mystery of this eternal building when we view our joys and sorrows apart by themselves, in the midst of fleeting time; just as a sentence becomes unintelligible if one has to spell through every word of it.

When once we perceive the unity of the scheme of that creation which is going on in us, we realise our relation to the ever-unfolding universe. We realise that we are in the process of being created in the same way as are the glowing heavenly orbs which revolve in their courses,—our desires, our sufferings, all finding their proper place within the whole.

THE human races will never again be able to go back to their citadels of high-walled exclusiveness. They have been exposed to each other, physically and intellectually. The shells, which have so long given them full security within their individual enclosures, have been broken, and by no artificial process can they be mended again. So we have to accept this fact, even though we have not yet fully adapted our minds to this changed environment of publicity, even though through it we may have to run all the risks entailed by the wider expansion of life's freedom.

CIVILISED man has come far away from the orbit of his normal life. He has gradually formed and intensified some habits that are like those of bees for adapting himself to his hive-world. We so often see modern men suffering from *ennui*, from world-weariness, from a spirit of rebellion against their environment for no reasonable cause whatever. Social revolutions are constantly ushered in with a suicidal violence that has its origin in our dissatisfaction with our hive-wall arrangement,—the too-exclusive enclosure that deprives us of the perspective which is so much needed to give us the proper proportion in our art of living. All this is an indication that man has not really been moulded in the model of the bee, and therefore he becomes recklessly anti-social when his freedom to be more than social is ignored.

THE sign of greatness in great geniuses is their enormous capacity to borrow, very often without their knowing it; they have an unlimited credit in the world market of culture. Only mediocrities are ashamed and afraid of borrowing, for they do not know how to pay back their debt in their own coin. Even the most foolish of critics does not dare blame Shakespeare for what he openly appropriated from outside his own national inheritance. The human soul is proud of its comprehensive sensitivity; it claims its freedom of entry everywhere when it is fully alive and awake.

FOR an artist it is a great chance to be able to meet a man of personality who walks solitary among those who are mere fragments of a crowd which is always on the move, pressed from behind. Such men are the makers of history, and one cannot but feel anxious lest they might miss their eternity by using all their forces in capturing the present by its throat, leaving it killed for all future. Men have not altogether been rare who furiously created their world by trampling human materials into the shape of their megalomaniac dreams, at last to burden history with the bleached bones of their short-lived glory; while there were others, the serene souls, who with their light of truth and magic of love have made deserts fruitful along endless stretches of grateful years.

A POET's mission is to attract the voice which is yet inaudible in the air; to inspire faith in the dream which is unfulfilled; to bring the earliest tidings of the unborn flower to a sceptic world.

So many are there to-day who do not believe. They do not know that faith in a great future itself creates that future; that without faith you cannot recognise your opportunities, which come again and again, but depart unheeded. Prudent men and unbelievers have created dissensions, but it is the eternal child, the dreamer, the man of simple faith, who has built up great civilisations.

To give us the taste of reality through freedom of mind is the nature of all arts. When in relation to them we talk of aesthetics, we must know that it is not about beauty in its ordinary meaning, but in that deeper meaning which a poet has expressed in his utterance: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty". An artist may paint a picture of a decrepit person not pleasant to look at, and yet we call it perfect when we become intensely conscious of its reality.

I FEEL proud that I have been born in this great age. I know that it must take time before we can adjust our minds to a condition which is not only new, but almost exactly the opposite of the old. Let us not imagine the death-struggle of the doomed to be a sign of life. Let us announce to the world that the light of the morning has come, not for entrenching ourselves behind barriers, but for meeting in mutual understanding and trust on the common field of co-operation; never for nourishing a spirit of rejection, but for that glad acceptance which constantly carries in itself the giving out of the best that we have.

HOPELESS tragedies of life can never technically be called beautiful, but when appearing against the background of art they delight us because of the convincingness of reality which they produce in our mind. It only proves that every object which fully asserts its existence to us because of its own inherent finality is beautiful; it is what is called in Sanscrit *manôhara*, the stealer of the mind,—the mind which stands between the knower and the known. We have our primal sympathy for all things that exist, for when realised they stimulate the consciousness of our own existence.

LIFE, which is an incessant explosion of freedom, finds its metre in continual falling back in death. Every day is a death, every moment even. If not, there would be an amorphous desert of deathlessness eternally dumb and still. For life also is *māyā*,—as moralists love to say, it *is* and *is not*. All that we find in it is the rhythm through which it shows itself. Are rocks and minerals any better? Has not science shown us the fact that the ultimate difference between one element and another is only that of rhythm? The fundamental distinction of gold from mercury lies merely in the difference of rhythm in their respective atomic constitutions, like the distinction of the king from his subject, which is not in their different constituents but in the different metres of their situation and circumstance. There you find behind the scene the Artist, the Magician of rhythm, who imparts an appearance of substance to the unsubstantial.

WHAT is this rhythm? It is the movement generated and regulated by harmonious restrictions. This is the creative force in the hand of the artist. So long as words remain in an uncadenced prose form, they do not give us any lasting feeling of reality. The moment they are taken and put into rhythm they vibrate into a radiance. It is the same with the rose. . . . The rose appears to me to be still, but because of its metre of composition it has a lyric of movement within that stillness, which is the same as the dynamic quality of a picture that has a perfect harmony. It produces a music in our consciousness by giving it a swing of motion synchronous with its own. If the picture were to consist of a disharmonious aggregate of colours and lines, it would be deadly still. In perfect rhythm, the art form becomes like the stars which in their seeming stillness are never still, like a motionless flame which is nothing but movement.

THE *I am* in me realises its own extension, its own infinity, whenever it truly realises something else. Unfortunately, owing to our limitations and a thousand and one preoccupations, a great part of our world, though closely surrounding us, is far away from the lamp-post of our attention; it is dim, it passes by us, a caravan of shadows, like the landscape seen in the night from the window of an illuminated railway compartment; the passenger knows that the outside world exists, that it is important, but for the time being the railway carriage for him is far more significant. If among innumerable objects in this world there be a few that come under the full illumination of our soul and thus assume reality for us, they constantly cry to our creative mind for a permanent representation. They belong to the same domain as that desire of ours which represents the longing for the performance of our own self.

IN the pictorial, plastic, and verbal arts the object and our feelings with regard to it are closely associated, like the rose and its perfume. In music the feeling extracted in sound becomes itself an independent object. It assumes a tune form which is definite, but a meaning which is indefinable and yet gripping our mind with the sense of an absolute truth.

There came a time, centuries ago, in Bengal, when the divine love-drama that had its eternal play in human souls was vividly revealed by a personality radiating its intimate realisation of God. The mind of a whole people was stirred by the vision of the world as an instrument through which sounded the invitation to us to the meeting of bliss. The ineffable mystery of God's love-call taking shape in an endless panorama of colours and forms, finding its chorus in the symphony of human affections, inspired an activity in a music that overflowed the restrictions of classical conventionalism. Our *kirtan* music in Bengal came to its being like a star flung up by a burning whirlpool of emotion in the heart of a whole people.

THE world as an art is the play of the Supreme Person revelling in image-making. Try to find out the ingredients of the image—they elude you, they never reveal to you the eternal secret of appearance. In your effort to capture life as expressed in living tissue, you will find carbon, nitrogen, and many other things utterly unlike life, but never life itself. The appearance does not offer any commentary on itself through its materials. You may call it *māyā* and pretend to disbelieve it; but the great artist, the *Māyāvin*, is not hurt. For art is *māyā*,—it has no other explanation but that it seems to be what it is. It never tries to conceal its evasiveness, it mocks even its own definition and plays the game of hide-and-seek through its constant flight in changes.

THE spirit of fight and the spirit of harmony both have their importance in the scheme of things. For making a musical instrument, the obduracy of materials has to be forced to yield to the purpose of the instrument-maker. But music itself is a revelation of beauty, it is not an outcome of fight: it springs from an inner realisation of harmony. The musical instrument and the music both have their own importance for humanity.

The civilisation that fights and conquers for man, and the civilisation that realises for him the fundamental unity in the depth of existence, are complementary to each other. When they join hands, human nature finds its balance; and its pursuits, through rugged paths, attain their ultimate meaning in an ideal of perfection.

COUREAGE, in the ethics of peace, means the courage of self-sacrifice; there, bravery has for its object the triumph of renunciation. And, in societies where such sacrifice and renunciation are cultivated, not the individual but the household is the primitive unit, and such household is broad, not narrow in conception and content. That is why, as the *Rāmā-yana* evolves from a collection of ballads into an epic, its main function is transformed from a narration of struggles against the outrages offered to the cult of tillage (*sītā*) into the exaltation of the ethics of the household. The unfaltering strength of self-renunciation which is needful for keeping true the varied relations between king and subject, father and son, brother and brother, husband and wife, master and servant, and among neighbours different in colour and character,—that is what it really glorifies.

BECAUSE the world of reality has more extensive boundaries for the poet and the artist, they can bring out the significance of a much larger variety of things. For in whatsoever we are made aware of some ideal of completeness, that becomes significant to us. A grain of sand is nothing to me, but a lotus flower has for me the full force of certitude. Though at every step the sand may obtrude itself on my attention,—grating on my feet, irritating my eye, setting my teeth on edge,—nevertheless it has not for me any fullness of truth. The lotus does not have to elbow its way into my notice, rather does my mind of its own accord go out to greet and welcome it.

PART V

THREE are many paradoxes in the world and one of them is this, that wherever the landscape is immense, the sky unlimited, clouds intimately dense, feelings unfathomable—that is to say, where infinitude is manifest—its fit companion is one solitary person; a multitude there seems so petty, so distracting.

An individual and the infinite are on equal terms, worthy to gaze on one another, each from his own throne. But where many men are, how small both humanity and infinitude become, how much they have to knock off each other, in order to fit in together! Each soul wants so much room to expand that in a crowd it needs must wait for gaps through which to thrust a little craning piece of a head from time to time.

THE true universal finds its manifestation in the individuality which is true. Beauty is universal, and a rose reveals it because, as a rose, it is individually beautiful. By making a decoction of a rose, jasmine, and lotus, you do not get to a realisation of some larger beauty which is interfloral. The true universalism is not the breaking down of the walls of one's own house, but the offering of hospitality to one's guests and neighbours.

I AM not a scientist, but I believe this material world is built of light; that matter, in its ultimate stage, is Light. Anyhow, the material world has for its source *movement*,—which is the same as light. The sun, the stars,—they are the keepers, the reservoir, of that which gives the planet the inspiration to move and to be moulded into a variety of things. This movement is the response to Light of the light that lives within the boundary of form.

But we know that this world of beauty, goodness, and truth has other qualities besides those of matter. I am inclined to call this the world of personality. For it is the personal man who is conscious of truth, beauty, and goodness. Not only is he conscious of them, but his personality is strengthened and enriched through a realisation of all that is true, good, and beautiful. This world of personality must also have its eternal foundation, just as the material world has for its foundation, light. And it is almost a truism to say that the fundamental light of this world of personality is Love.

WHAT is the great fact of this age? It is that the messenger of an immense future has come; he has knocked at our gate and all the bars have given way. Our doors have burst open. The human races have come out of their enclosures. They have gathered together.

We have been engaged in cultivating each his own individual life, in the seclusion of our own national workshops. We did not know what was happening outside the walls. We had neither the wisdom nor the opportunity to harmonise our growth with world tendencies. But there are no longer walls to hide us. We have at length to prove our worth to the whole world, not merely to admiring groups of our own people. We must justify our own existence. We must show, each in our own civilisation, that which is universal.

IN the night, we stumble over things and become acutely conscious of their individual separateness, but the day reveals the great unity which embraces them. And the man, whose inner vision is bathed in an illumination of his consciousness, at once realises the spiritual unity reigning supreme over all differences of race, and his mind no longer awkwardly stumbles over individual facts of separateness in the human world, accepting them as final; he realises that peace is in the inner harmony which dwells in truth, and not in any outer adjustments; that beauty carries an eternal assurance of our spiritual relationship to reality, which waits for its perfection in the response of our love.

WHEN the artist sends his song forth from the depth of a full heart, that is joy indeed. And the joy is redoubled when this same song is wafted back to him as hearer. If, when the creation of the Arch-Poet is thus returning back to him in a flood of joy, we allow it to flow over our consciousness, we at once, immediately, become aware, in an inexpressible manner, of the end to which this flood is streaming. And as we become aware, our love goes forth; and our selves are moved from their moorings and would fain float down the stream of joy to its infinite goal. This is the meaning of the longing which stirs within us at the sight of beauty.

ALL the language of joy is beauty. It is necessary to note, however, that joy is not pleasure, and beauty not mere prettiness. Joy is the outcome of detachment from self and lives in freedom of spirit. Beauty is that profound expression of reality which satisfies our hearts without any other allurements but its own ultimate value. When in some pure moments of ecstasy we realise this in the world around us, we see the world, not as merely existing, but as decorated in its forms, sounds, colours, and lines; we feel in our hearts that there is One who through all things proclaims, "I have joy in my creation".

THREE come in our history occasions when the consciousness of a large multitude becomes suddenly illumined with the recognition of something which rises far above the triviality of daily happenings. Such an occasion there was when the voice of Buddha reached distant shores across all physical and moral impediments. Then our life and our world found their profound meaning of reality in their relation to the central person who offered us the emancipation of love. And men, in order to make this great human experience ever-memorable, determined to do the impossible; they made rocks to speak, stones to sing, caves to remember; the cry of joy and hope took immortal forms along hills and deserts, across barren solitudes and populous cities. A gigantic creative endeavour built up its triumph in stupendous carvings defying obstacles that were overwhelming. Such a heroic activity over the greater part of the Eastern continent clearly answers the question, *What is art?* It is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the real.

As art-creations are emotional representations of facts and ideas, they can never be like the product of a photographic camera which is passively receptive of lights and shadows in all their indiscriminate details. Our scientific mind is unbiassed, it accepts facts with a cold-blooded curiosity that has no preference. The artistic mind is strongly biassed, and that bias not only guides it in its fastidious selection of the subject, but also in that of its details. It throws the coloured lights of emphasis on its theme in such a manner that it attains a character which clearly distinguishes it from its fellows. The skylarks of science offer corroboration of their truth through their similarity; the skylarks of artists and poets through their dissimilarity. If Shelley's poem on this bird had been just like that of Wordsworth, it would have been rejected for its lack of truth.

MUSIC is the most abstract of all arts, as mathematics is in the region of science. In fact, these two have a deep relationship with each other. Mathematics as the logic of number and dimension is the basis of our scientific knowledge. When taken out of its concrete associations with cosmic phenomena and reduced to symbols, it reveals its grand structural majesty, the inevitability of its own perfect concord. But there is also such a thing as the magic of mathematics, which works at the root of all appearances, producing harmony of unity, the cadence of the interrelation of the parts bringing them under the dominion of the whole. This rhythm of harmony has been extracted from its usual context and exhibited through the medium of sound. And thus the pure essence of expressiveness in existence is offered in music. In sound it finds the least resistance and has a freedom unencumbered by the burden of facts and thoughts. It gives it a power to arouse in us an intense feeling of reality, it seems to lead us into the soul of all things and make us feel the very breath of inspiration flowing from the supreme creative joy.

ART represents the inexhaustible magnificence of creative spirit; it is generous in its acceptance and generous in its bestowal; it is unique in its manner and universal in its appeal; it is hospitable to *all* because it has the wealth which is its own; its vision is new though its view may be old; it carries its special criterion of excellence within itself and therefore contemptuously refuses to be browbeaten into conformity with a rhetoric manufactured by those who are not in the secret of the subtle mysteries of creation, who want to simplify through their academic code of law that which is absolutely simple through its spontaneity.

CHILDREN are living beings—more living than grown-up people, who have built their shells of habit around themselves. Therefore it is absolutely necessary for their mental health and development that they should not have mere schools for their lessons, but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love. It must be an *ashram* where men have gathered for the highest end of life, in the peace of Nature; where life is not merely meditative, but fully awake in its activities, where boys' minds are not being perpetually drilled into believing that the ideal of the self-idolatry of the nation is the truest ideal for them to accept; where they are bidden to realise man's world as God's Kingdom to whose citizenship they have to aspire; where the sunrise and sunset and the silent glory of stars are not daily ignored; where Nature's festivities of flowers and fruit have their joyous recognition from man; and where the young and the old, the teacher and the student, sit at the same table to take their daily food and the food of their eternal life.

PURE joy is the children's joy. They have the power of using any and every trivial thing to create their world of interest, and the ugliest doll is made beautiful with their imagination and lives with their life. He who can retain this faculty of enjoyment after he has grown up, is indeed the true Idealist. For him things are not merely visible to the eye or audible to the ear, but they are also sensible to the heart, and their narrownesses and imperfections are lost in the glad music which he himself supplies.

I BELIEVE that children should be surrounded with the things of Nature which have their own educational value. Their minds should be allowed to stumble on and be surprised at everything that happens in the life of to-day. The new to-morrow will stimulate their attention with new facts of life. This is the best method for the child. But what happens in school is, that every day, at the same hour, the same book is brought and poured out for him. His attention is never hit by the chance surprises which come from learning from Nature.

THE ineffable emanation of woman's nature has, from the first, played its part in the creations of man, unobtrusively but inevitably. Had man's mind not been energised by the inner working of woman's vital charm, he would never have attained his successes. Of all the higher achievements of civilisation —the devotion of the toiler, the valour of the brave, the creations of the artist,—the secret spring is to be found in woman's influence. In the clash and battle of primitive civilisation, the action of woman's *shakti* is not clearly manifest; but as civilisation becomes spiritual in the course of its development, and the union of man with man is acknowledged to be more important than the differences between them, the charm of woman gets the opportunity to become the predominant factor. Such spiritual civilisation can only be upheld if the emotion of woman and the intellect of man are contributed in mutual shares for its purposes. Then their respective contributions may combine gloriously in ever-fresh creations, and their difference will no longer make for inequality.

It seems that the subconscious remembrance of some primeval dwelling-place where, in our ancestors' minds, were figured and voiced the mysteries of the inarticulate rocks, the rushing water, and the dark whispers of the forest, is constantly stirring our blood with its call. Some shadow-haunted living reminiscence in me seems to ache for the pre-natal cradle and playground it once shared with the primal life in the illimitable magic of land, water, and air. The thin, shrill cry of the high-flying kite in the blazing sun of a dazed Indian mid-day sent to a solitary boy the signal of a dumb, distant kinship. The few cocoanut palms growing by the boundary wall of our house, like some war captives from an older army of invaders of this earth, spoke to me of the eternal companionship which the great brotherhood of trees has ever offered to man. They made my heart wistful with the invitation of the forest.

OUR grown-up mind is always full of the things we have to arrange and deal with, and therefore the things that happen around us,—the coming of morning, celebrated with music and with flowers—leave no mark upon us. We do not allow them to do so, for our minds are already crowded; the stream of lessons perpetually flowing from the heart of Nature does not touch us, we merely choose those which are useful, rejecting the rest as undesirable because we want the shortest cut to success.

Children have no such distractions. With them every new fact or event comes to a mind that is always open, with an abundant hospitality; and, through this exuberant, indiscriminate acceptance, they learn innumerable facts within a very short time, amazing compared with our own slowness. These are most important lessons of life, which are thus learnt, and what is still more wonderful is, that the greater part of them are abstract truths. It is even difficult to imagine how it is possible for a child to understand abstract ideas through mere guessing, to master that most complex organism of expression—our language, while its mind is so immature.

MAN, who is provident, feels for that life of his which is not yet existent, feels much more for that than for the life that is with him; therefore he is ready to sacrifice his present inclination for the unrealised future. In this he becomes great, for he realises truth. Even to be efficiently selfish a man has to recognise this truth, and has to curb his immediate impulses—in other words, has to be moral. For our moral faculty is the faculty by which we know that life is not made up of fragments purposeless and discontinuous. This moral sense of man not only gives him the power to see that the self has a continuity in time, but it also enables him to see that he is not true when he is only restricted to his own self. He is more in truth than he is in fact.

THE realisation of our soul has its moral and its spiritual side. The moral side represents training of unselfishness, control of desire; the spiritual side represents sympathy and love. They should be taken together and never separated. The cultivation of the merely moral side of our nature leads us to the dark region of narrowness and hardness of heart, to the intolerant arrogance of goodness; and the cultivation of the merely spiritual side of our nature leads us to a still darker region of revelry in intemperance of imagination.

REILIGION must only deal with things that belong to the spiritual realm of the eternal, and with sentiments that are self-luminous, carrying their ultimate value in themselves. It should allow a great part of human existence to lie outside its direct interference, so that life may enjoy its freedom of growth guided by laws of reason, or rhythm of beauty. The guidance of reason constantly varies its course, in its perpetual process of adjustment with unforeseen circumstances; its scope is ever being widened by contact with new data. But if religion, which is to give us emancipation in the realm of the infinite, tries also to usurp the place of reason in the world of the finite, then it brings about utter stagnation and sterility.

REILIGION is not a fractional thing that can be doled out in fixed weekly or daily measures as one among various subjects in the school syllabus. It is the truth of our complete being, the consciousness of our personal relationship with the infinite; it is the true centre of gravity of our life. This we can attain during our childhood by daily living in a place where the truth of the spiritual world is not obscured by a crowd of necessities assuming artificial importance; where life is simple, surrounded by fullness of leisure, by ample space and pure air and profound peace of Nature; and where men live with a perfect faith in the eternal life before them.

OUR union with a Being whose activity is world-wide and who dwells in the heart of humanity cannot be a passive one. In order to be united with Him we have to divest our work of selfishness, we must work for all. When I say for *all*, I do not mean for a countless number of individuals. Work that is morally good, however small in extent, is universal in character. Such work makes for a realisation of *Visvakarmā*, the World-worker, who works for others. In order to be one with this *Mahātmā*¹ one must cultivate the greatness of soul which identifies itself with the soul of all peoples and not merely with that of one's own.

¹ *Lit.*, "Great Soul".

YOGA is for the union with the all, which is not the sum total of things, but the truth which dwells in them and beyond them. For the person whose spiritual sense is dull, the desire for realisation is reduced to physical possession, an actual grasping in space. His longing for magnitude becomes not an aspiration towards the great, but a mania for the big. But the spiritual realisation of the universal which lies along the process of *yoga* is not through augmentation of possession in dimension or number. For unending quantity is merely limit made endless, which is not the same as the unlimited. The truth that is infinite dwells in the ideal of unity, which we find in the deeper relatedness of all things in this world. This truth of relation is not in space, it can only be realised in one's own spirit, because it lies in the spirit of things.

THREE are circumstances in which the imbibing of religion should be as easy for children as taking breath. But this very taking of breath may be put beyond the doctor's aid by the slightest of obstructions. In fact, if the patient is conscious of an effort in breathing, that itself is a bad sign. It is the same with religion. When spiritual feeling permeates a community, then the religious life is spontaneous; it naturally finds its creative activity and moral expression. The problem of the religious education of the children does not then separately arise, because their subconscious mind grows in an atmosphere rich with the sense of divine presence.

REILIGION has its genesis in man's desire to be released from the limitation of what *is*. The crudest magical rites, however weird or meaningless they may appear, have in some vague manner this freedom for their object. Man is the only creature who is a born rebel, never reconciled to the conditions of his existence. In the depth of his nature he carries an instinctive faith in the paradox that the completeness of reality consists in the endless contradiction of what *does* exist and what *should* exist. His literature and art find their inspiration in the ever-present suggestions that come from beyond the boundaries of his senses, and yet seem closer to him than the obvious.

THE END

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